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THE

LIFE OF CHRIST.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D., LL.D.

VOL. III.

LAST DAY OF OUR LORD'S PASSION, AND FORTY DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

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OR

OUR LORD'S PASSION.

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I.

The Betrayal and the Betrayer.*

"THE night on which he was betrayed" —that long, sleepless, checkered, troubled night—the last night of our Lord's suffering life—that one and only night in which we can follow him throughout, and trace his footsteps from hour to hour,—through what strange vicissitudes of scene and incident, of thought and feeling, did our Saviour on that night pass! The meeting in the upper chamber, the washing of the disciples' feet, the keeping of the Hebrew passover; the cloud that gathered round his brow, the sad warnings to Peter, and the terrible ones to Judas; the institution of his own Supper,

* Matthew xxvi. 47–56; Mark xiv. 43–50; Luke xxii. 47–53 John xviii. 2–11.

the tender consolatory discourse, the sublime intercessory prayer; the Garden; its brief and broken prayers, its deep and awful agony; the approach of the High Priest's band, the arrest, the desertion by all, the denials by one; the private examination before Annas, the public arraignment before the Sanhedrim; the silence as to all minor charges, the great confession, the final and formal condemnation to death;—all these between the time that the sun of that Thursday evening set, and the sun of Friday morning rose upon Jerusalem. We are all, perhaps, more familiar with the incidents of the first half of that night, than with those of the second. Of its manifold sorrows, the agony in the Garden formed the fitting climax. Both outwardly and inwardly, it was to the great Sufferer its hour of darkest, deepest midnight. Let us join him now as he rises from his last struggle in Gethsemane, and follow till we see him laid in Joseph's sepulchre.

The sore amazement is past. Some voice

has said to the troubled waters of his spirit, Peace, be still! Instead of the stir and tumult of the soul, there is a calm and dignified composure, which never once forsakes him, till the same strange internal agony once more comes upon him on the cross. "Rise," says Jesus, as for the third and last time he bends over the slumbering disciples in the Garden, "Rise, let us be going. Lo, he that betrayeth is at hand!" Wakeful as he has been whilst the others were sleeping, has he heard the noise of approaching footsteps? has he seen the shadows of advancing forms, the flickering light of torch and lantern glimmering through the olive leaves? It was not necessary that eye or ear should give him notice of the approach. He knew all that the betrayer meditated when, a few hours before, he had said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly." He had seen and known, as though he had been present, the immediate resort of Judas to those with whom he had so recently made his unhallowed bargain, telling them that the hour had come for car

rying the projected arrangement into execution, and that he was quite sure that Jesus, as his custom all that week had been, would go out to Gethsemane so soon as the meeting in the upper chamber had broken up, and that there they could easily and surely, without any fear of popular disturbance, lay hold of him. The proposal was hailed and adopted with eager haste, for there was no time to be lost,—they had but a single day for action left. The band for seizing him was instantly assembled—"a great multitude," quite needlessly numerous, even though resistance had been contemplated by the eleven; a band curiously composed,—some Roman soldiers in it from the garrison of Fort Antonia, excited on being summoned to take part in a midnight enterprise of some difficulty and danger; the captain of the Temple guard, accompanied by some subordinates, private servants of Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priests, with some members even of the Sanhedrim among them;* a band curiously ac-

* See Luke xxii. 52.

coutred,—with staves as well as swords, with lanterns and torches, that, clear though the night was—the moon being at the full,* they might hunt their victim out through all the shady retreats of the olive gardens, and prevent the possibility of escape. Stealthily they cross the Kedron, with Judas at their head, and come to the very place where all this while Jesus has been enduring his great agony. Yes; this is the place where Judas tells them they will be so sure to find him. Now, then, is the time for the lanterns and the torches. They are saved the search. Stepping out suddenly into the clear moonlight, Jesus himself stands before them, and calmly says, "Whom seek ye?" There are many in that band who know him well enough, but there is not one of them who has courage to answer—"Thee." A creeping awe is already on their spirits. They leave it to others, to those who know him but by name, to say, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus

* We know it was so from the day of the month on which the Passover was celebrated.

says to them, I am he; and as soon as he has said it, they go backward, and fall every one to the ground. Has some strange sight met their eye, has Jesus been momentarily transfigured as on the Mount, have some stray beams from the concealed glory burst forth upon them, or is it some inward terror shot by a hand invisible through their hearts? Whatever the spell be that has stripped them of all strength, and driven them backwards to the ground, it lasts but for a brief season. He who suddenly laid it on as quickly lifts it off. But for that short time, what a picture does the scene present! Jesus standing in the quiet moonlight, calmly waiting till the postrate men shall rise again; or turning, perhaps, a pensive look upon his disciples cowering under the shade of the olive-trees, and gazing with wonder at the sight of that whole band lying flat upon the ground. For a moment or two, how still it is! you could have heard the falling of an olive-leaf. But now the spell is over, and they rise. The Roman soldier starts to his

feet again, as more than half ashamed, not knowing what should have so frightened him. The Jewish officer gathers up his scattered strength, wondering that it had not gone for ever. Again the quiet question comes from the lips of Jesus, Whom seek ye? They say to him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answers, "I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou hast given me I have lost none."

Perfectly spontaneous, then, on the part of our Divine Redeemer, was the delivering of himself up into the hands of his enemies. He who by a word and look sent that rough hireling band reeling backwards to the ground, how easily could he have kept it there; or how easily, though they had been standing all around him, could he have passed out through the midst of them, every eye so blinded that it could not see him, every arm so paralyzed that it could not touch him? Judas knew how in such a manner he had

previously escaped. He must have had a strong impression that it would not be so easy a thing to accomplish the arrest, when he told the men, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and hold him fast." Take him; hold him! it will only be if he please to be taken and to be held that they will have any power to do it. This perfect freedom from all outward compulsion, this entirely voluntary surrender of himself to suffering and death, enter as necessary elements into the great Atonement. And is not its essential element—its being made for others—shadowed forth in this outward incident of the Redeemer's life? "Take me," he said, "but let these go their way." It was to throw a protecting shield over this little flock, that he put forth his great power over that mixed multitude before him, and made them feel how wholly they were within his grasp. It was to acquire for the time such a mastery over them that they should consent to let his disciples go. It was no part of their purpose beforehand to have done so. They proved

this, when, the temporary impression over, they seized the young man by the way, whom curiosity had drawn out of the city, whom they took to be one of his disciples, and who with difficulty escaped out of their hands.

"Take me, but let these go their way." John saw, in the freedom and safety of the disciples thus secured, a fulfilment of the Lord's own saying in the prayer of the Supper-chamber, "Them that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." We can not imagine that the beloved disciple saw nothing beyond protection from common earthly danger in the expression which he quotes; but that he saw, in the very manner in which that kind of protection had been extended, a type or emblem of the higher and spiritual deliverance that Christ has accomplished for his people by his deliverance unto death. Freedom for us, by his suffering himself to be bound; safety for us, by the sacrifice of himself; life for us, by the death which he endured: have we not much of the very soul and spirit of the atonement in those

few words, "Take me, but let these go their way?" It is the spiritual David, the great good Shepherd, saying, "Let thine hand be laid upon me; but as for these sheep, not, O Lord my God, on them."

Judas stood with those to whom Jesus said, Whom seek ye? Along with them he reeled back and fell to the ground. Along with them he speedily regained his standing posture, and was a listener as the Lord said, I have told you that I am he; inviting them to do with him as they wished. There is a pause, a hesitation; for who will be the first to lay hand upon him? Judas will relieve them of any lingering fear. He will show them how safe it is to approach this Jesus. Though the stepping forth of Christ, and the questions and answers which followed, have done away with all need of the preconcerted signal, he will yet go through all that he had engaged to do; or, perhaps, it is almost a mechanical impulse upon which he acts, for he had fixed on the thing that he was to do toward accomplishing the arrest; he had

conned his part well beforehand, and braced himself up to go through with it. Hence, when the time for action comes, he stops not to reflect, but lets the momentum of his predetermined purpose carry him along. He salutes Jesus with a kiss. If ever a righteous indignation might legitimately be felt, surely it was here. And if that burning sense of wrong had gone no further in its expression than simply the refusal of such a salutation, would not Christ have acted with unimpeachable propriety? But it is far above this level that Jesus will now rise. He will give an example of gentleness, of forbearance, of long-suffering kindness without a parallel. Jesus accepts the betrayer's salutation. He does more. He says a word or two to this deluded man;—"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Is it possible that thou canst imagine, after all that passed between us at the supper-table, that I am ignorant of thy purpose in this visit? I know that purpose well; thou knowest that I do; if not, I will make a last attempt to make thee know and feel it

now. Thought of, cared for, warned in so many ways, art thou really come to betray such a Master as I have ever been to thee? But though thou hast made up thy mind to such a deed, how is it that thou choosest such a cloak as this beneath which to conceal thy purpose? The deed is bad enough itself without crowning it with the lie of the hypocrite,—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"—the last complaint of wounded love, the last of the many and most touching appeals made to the conscience and heart of the betrayer; rebuke and remonstrance in the words, but surely their tone is one more of pity than of anger; surely the wish of the speaker was to arrest the traitor, if it were not yet too late. Had Judas yielded even at that last moment; with a broken and a contrite heart had he thrown himself at his Master's feet, to bathe with tears the feet of him whose cheek he had just polluted with his unhallowed kiss; looking up through those tears of penitence, had he sought mercy of the Lord, how freely would

that mercy have been extended to him! who can doubt that he would have been at once forgiven? But he did not, he would not yield; and so on he went, till there was nothing left to him but the horror of that remorse which dug for him the grave of the suicide.

We often wonder, as we read his story, how it was ever possible, that, in the face of so many, such explicit, solemn, affectionate appeals, this man should have so obstinately pursued his course. We should wonder, perhaps, the less, if we only reflected what a blinding, hardening power any one fixed idea, any one settled purpose, any one dominant passion, in the full flush and fervor of its ascendency, exerts upon the human spirit; how it blinds to consequences that are then staring us in the very face; how it deadens to remonstrances to which, in other circumstances, we should at once have yielded; how it carries us over obstacles that at other times would at once have stopped us; nay, more, and what perhaps is the most striking feature

of the whole, how the very interferences, for which otherwise we should have been grateful, are resented; how the very appeals intended and fitted to arrest, become as so many goads driving us on the more determinedly upon our path. So it was with Judas. And let us not think that we have in him a monstrous specimen of almost superhuman wickedness. We should be nearer the truth, I suspect, if we took him as an average specimen of what the passion of avarice, or any like passion, when once it has got the mastery, may lead any man to be and do. For we have no reason to believe of Judas, that from the first he was an utter reprobate. Our Lord we scarcely can believe would have admitted such a man to the number of the twelve. Can it be believed of him that when he first joined himself to Jesus, it was to make gain of that connexion? There was but little prospect of worldly gain in following the Nazarene. Nor can we fairly attribute that obstinacy which Judas showed in the last great crisis of his life, to utter deadness of

conscience, utter hardness of heart. The man who no sooner heard the death-sentence given against his Master, than—without even waiting to see if it would be executed—he rushed before the men by whom that sentence had been pronounced—the very men with whom he had made his unholy covenant, from whom he had got but an hour or two before the price of blood—exclaiming in the bitterness of his heart, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood;"—the man who took those thirty pieces of silver, which his itching palm had so longed to clutch, but which now were burning like scorching lead the hand that grasped them, and flung them ringing on the temple floor, and hurried to a lonely field without the city walls and hanged himself, dying in all likelihood before his Master—let us not think of him that he was utterly heartless—that he had a conscience seared as with a hot iron.

What, then, is the true explanation of his character and career? Let us assume that, when he first united himself to Christ, it was

not of deliberate design to turn that connexion into a source of profit. He found, however, as time run on, that to some small extent it could be so employed. The little company that he had joined had chosen him to be their treasurer, to hold and to dispense the slender funds which they possessed. Those who are fond of money, as he was, are generally careful in the keeping, thrifty in their use of it. Judas had those faculties in perfection, and they won for him that office of trust, to him so terribly dangerous. The temptation was greater than he could resist. He became a pilferer from that small bag. Little as it had to feed upon, his passion grew. It grew, for he had no higher principle, no better feeling, to subdue it. It grew, till he began to picture to himself what untold wealth was in store for him when his Master should throw off that reserve and disguise which he had so long and so studiously preserved, and take to himself his power, and set up his kingdom—a kingdom which he, in common with all the apostles, believed was

to be a visible and temporal one. It grew, till delay became intolerable. At the supper in Bethany, it vexed him to see that box of ointment of spikenard which might have been sold for three hundred pence, wasted on what seemed to him an idle piece of premature and romantic homage. It vexed him still more to hear his Master rebuke the irritation he had displayed, and speak now once again, as he had been doing so often lately, of his death and burial, as if the splendid vision of his kingdom were never to be realized. Could nothing be done to force his Master on to exercise his kingly power? These Scribes and Pharisees, who hated him so bitterly, desired nothing so much as to get him into their hands. If once they did so, would he not, in self-defence, be obliged to put forth that power which Judas knew that he possessed? And were he to do so, things could not remain any longer as they were. The Passover—this great gathering of the people—would soon go past, and he, Judas, and the rest, have to resume their weary journeyings

on foot throughout Judea. Thus and then it was, that, in all likelihood, the thought flashed into the mind of the betrayer to go and ask the chief priests what they would give him if he delivered Jesus into their hands. They offered him thirty pieces of silver, a very paltry bribe—the price in the old Hebrew code of a slave that was gored by an ox—less than £5 of our money; —a bribe insufficient of itself to have tempted even a grossly avaricious man, in the position in which Judas was, to betray his Master, knowing or believing that it was unto death. Why, in a year or two Judas might have realized as much as that by petty pilferings from the apostolical bag. But this scheme of his would bring his Master to the test. It would expedite what, to his covetous, ambitious heart, had seemed to be that slow and meaningless course to a throne and kingdom which his Master had been pursuing. Not suspecting what the immediate and actual issue was to be, he made his unholy compact with the High Priests. He

made it on the Wednesday of the Passion week. Next evening he sat with Jesus in the supper-chamber. He found himself detected; more than one terrible warning was sounded in his ears. Strange, you may think, that instead of stopping him in his course, these warnings suggested, perhaps for the first time, the thought that what he had engaged to do might be done that very night. The words, "What thou doest do quickly," themselves gave eagerness and firmness to his purpose; for, after all, though Jesus seemed for the time so much displeased,—let this scheme but prosper,—let the kingdom be set up, and would he not be sure to forgive the offence that had hastened so happy a result?

Have we any grounds for interpreting in this way the betrayal? Are we right in attributing such motives to Judas? If not, then how are we to explain his surprise when he saw his Master, though still possessing all his wonderful power, as he showed by the healing of the servant's ear, allow himself to

be bound and led away like a felon? How are we to explain the consternation of Judas when he learned that though Jesus publicly, before the Sanhedrim, claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, yet, instead of there being any acquiescence in that claim, a universal horror was expressed, and on the very ground of his making it, he was doomed to the death of a blasphemer? Then it was, when all turned out so differently from what he had anticipated, that the idea of his having been the instrument of his Master's death entered like iron into the soul of Judas. Then it was, that, overwhelmed with nameless, countless disappointments, vexations, self-reproaches, his very living to see his Master die became intolerable to him, and in his despair he flung his ill-used life away.

Accept such solution, and the story of the betrayal of our Lord becomes natural and consistent; reject it, and have you not difficulties in your way not to be got over by any amount of villany that you may attribute to the trai-

tor? But does not this solution take down the crime of Judas from that pinnacle of almost superhuman and unapproachable guilt on which many seem inclined to place it? It does; but it renders it all the more available as a beacon of warning to us all. For if we are right in the idea we have formed of the character and conduct of Judas, there have been many since his time, there may be many still, in the same way, and from the operation of the same motives, betrayers of Christ. For everywhere he is a Judas, with whom his worldly interests, his worldly ambition, prevail over his attachment to Christ and to Christ's cause; who joins the Christian society, it may not be to make gain thereby,—but who, when the occasion presents itself, scruples not to make what gain he can of that connexion; who, beneath the garb of the Christian calling, pursues a dishonest traffic; who, when the gain and the godliness come into collision, sacrifices the godliness for the gain. How many such Judases the world has seen, how much of that Judas spirit there

may be in our own hearts, I leave it to your knowledge of yourselves and your knowledge of the world to determine.

Let us now resume our narrative of the arrest. Whatever lingering reluctance to touch Christ had been felt, that kiss of Judas removed. They laid their hands upon him instantly thereafter, grasping him as if he were a vulgar villain of the highway, and binding him after the merciless fashion of the Romans. This is what one, at least, of his followers can not bear. Peter springs forth from the darkness, draws his sword, and aims at the head of the first person he sees; who, however, bends to the side, and his ear only is lopped off. To Christ an unwelcome act of friendship. It ruffles his composure, it impairs the dignity of his patience. For the first and only time a human creature suffers that he may be protected. The injury thus done he must instantly repair. They have his hand within their hold, when, gently saying to them, "Suffer ye thus far," he releases it from their grasp, and, stretching it out,

touches the bleeding ear, and heals it :—the only act of healing wrought on one who neither asked it of him, nor had any faith in his healing virtue ; but an act which showed how full of almighty power that hand was which yet gave itself up to ignominious bonds. Then said Jesus to Peter, " Put up again thy sword into his place : for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I can not now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?" He was drinking then, even at that time, of the same cup in regard to which he had been praying in the Garden. Not only his agonies in Gethsemane and on the Cross, but all his griefs, internal and external, were ingredients in that cup which, for us and for our salvation, he took, and drank to the very dregs—a cup put by his Father's hand into his, and by him voluntarily taken, that the will of his Father

might be done, and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. All this about the cup, and his Father, and the Scriptures, spoken for the instruction and reproof of Peter, must have sounded not a little strange to those Chief Priests and scribes and elders who have come out to be present, at least, if not to take part in the apprehension, and who are now standing by his side. But for them, too, there must be a word, to show them that he is after all a very brother of our race, who feels as any other innocent man would feel if bound thus, and led away as a malefactor. "And Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." A short hour of fancied triumph theirs; the powers of darkness permitted for a short season to prevail: but beyond that hour, light, and a full, glorious, eternal triumph his.

"Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." That utter desertion had been one of the incidents of this night of sorrows upon which his foreseeing eye had already fixed. "The hour cometh," he had said to them in the upper chamber, "yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." It was only during that hurried march from the Garden to the judgment-hall that Jesus was left literally and absolutely alone: not one friendly eye upon him; not one friendly arm within his reach. But this temporary solitude, was it not the type of the inner, deeper solitude, in which his whole earthly work was carried on?—not the solitude of the hermit or the monk,—he lived ever with and among his fellow-men; not the solitude of pride, sullenly refusing all sympathy and aid; not the solitude of selfishness, creating around its icy centre a cold, bleak, barren wilderness; not the solitude of sickly sentimentality, forever crying out that it can find no one to un-

derstand or appreciate. No ; but the solitude of a pure, holy, heavenly spirit, into all whose deeper thoughts there was not a single human being near him or around him who could enter ; with all whose deeper feelings there was not one who could sympathize ; whose truest, deepest motives, ends, and objects, in living and dying as he did, not one could comprehend. Spiritually, and all throughout, the loneliest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ. But there were hours when that solitude deepened upon his soul. So was it in the Garden, when, but a stone-cast from the nearest to him upon earth, even that broken, imperfect sympathy which their looking on him and watching with him in his great sorrow might have supplied, was denied to him, and an angel had to be sent from heaven to cheer the forsaken one of earth. So was it upon the cross, in that dread moment, when he could no longer even say, "I am not alone, for my Father is with me ;" when there burst from his dying lips that cry—a cry from the darkest, deepest, dreariest loneliness into

which a pure and holy spirit ever passed—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Shall we pity him,—in that lonely life, these lonely sufferings, that lonely death? Our pity he does not ask. Shall we sympathize with him? Our sympathy he does not need. But let us stand by the brink of that deep and awful gulf into which he descended, and through which he passed; and let wonder, awe, gratitude, love, enter into and fill all our hearts, as we remember that that descent and that passage were made to redeem our souls from death, and to open up a way for us into a sinless and sorrowless heaven.

II.

The Denials, Repentance, and Restoration of St. Peter.*

When they saw their Master bound and borne away, all the disciples forsook him and fled. Two of them, however, recovered speedily from their panic. Foremost now, and bravest of them all, John first regained his self-possession, and returning on his footsteps followed the band which conveyed Jesus to the residence of the High Priest. Coming alone, and so far behind the others, he might have found some difficulty in getting admission. The day had not yet dawned, and at so early an hour, and upon so unusual an occasion, the keeper of the outer door

* Matthew xxvi. 57–59, 69–75; Mark xiv. 54, 55, 66–72; Luke xxii. 54–62; John xviii. 15–27; Mark xvi. 7; John xxi. 15–17.

might have hesitated to admit a stranger; but John had some acquaintance with the domestics of the High Priest, and so got entrance; an entrance which Peter might not have ventured to ask, or asking, might have failed to get, had not John noticed him following in the distance, and, on looking back as he entered, seen him standing outside the door. He went, therefore, and spoke to the porteress, who at his instance allowed Peter to pass in. The two disciples made their way together into the interior quadrangular hall, at the upper and raised end of which Jesus was being cross-examined by Annas. It was the coldest hour of the night, the hour that precedes the dawn, and the servants and officers had kindled a fire in that end of the hall where they were gathered. Peter did not wish to be recognized, and the best way he thought to preserve his incognito was to put at once the boldest face he could upon it, act as if he had been one of the capturing band and had as good a right to be there as others of that mixed company, as little known in this palace

as himself. So stepping boldly forward, and sitting down among the men who were warming themselves around the fire, he made himself one of them. The woman who kept the door was standing near. The strong light of the kindling fire, falling upon that group of faces, her eye fell upon Peter's. That surely, it occurred to her as she looked at it, was the face of the man whom she had admitted a few minutes ago, of whose features she had caught a glimpse as he passed by. She looks again, and looks more earnestly.* Her first impression is confirmed. It is John's friend; that Galilean's friend; some friend too, no doubt, of this same Jesus. She says so to a companion by her side; but not satisfied with that, wondering, perhaps, at the way in which Peter was comporting himself, she waits till she has caught his eye, and going up to him she says: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"—a short, abrupt, peremptory, unexpected challenge. It takes Peter entirely by surprise. It throws him wholly

* See John xviii. 17; Mark xiv. 67; Luke xxii. 56.

off his guard. There they are, the eyes of all those men around now turned inquiringly upon him; and there she is—a woman he knows nothing of—perhaps had scarcely noticed as he passed quickly through the porch,—a woman who can know nothing about him, yet putting that pert question, to which, if he is to keep up the character he has assumed, there must be a quick and positive reply. And so the first hasty falsehood escapes his lips. The woman, however, won't believe him when he says that he does not understand her question. Both to himself and to others around her, she re-affirms her first belief. Peter has to back his first falsehood by a second and a third: "Woman, I am not one of this man's disciples; I know him not."—Peter's first denial of his Master.

He has now openly committed himself, and he must carry the thing through as best he can. He is not at ease, however, in his seat with the others around the fire. The glare of that light is too strong. Those prying eyes disturb. As soon as conveniently he can,

without attracting notice, he rises and retires into the shadow of the porch, through which in entering he had passed. A cock now crows without. He hears but heeds it not. Perhaps he might have done so, had not another woman—some friend in all likelihood of the porteress with whom she had been conversing—been overheard by him affirming most positively, as she pointed him out, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." And she too comes up to him and repeats the saying to himself. The falsehood of the first denial he has now to repeat and justify. He does so with an oath, declaring, "I do not know the man."—Peter's second denial of his Master.

A full hour has passed. The examination going on at the other end of the hall has been engrossing the attention of the onlookers. Peter's lost composure and self-confidence have in a measure been regained. He is out in the hall again, standing talking with the others; no glare of light upon his face, yet little thinking all the while that by his

very talking he is supplying another mode of recognition. And now for the third time, and from many quarters, he is challenged. One said, "Of a truth this fellow was with him." A second: "Did I not see thee with him in the garden?" A third: "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." Beset and badgered thus, Peter begins to curse and to swear, as he affirms, "I know not the man of whom you speak."—Peter's third and last denial of his Lord.

Truly a very sad and humbling exhibition this of human frailty. But is it one so rare? Has it seldom been repeated since? Have we never ourselves been guilty of a like offence against our Saviour? Is there no danger that we may again be guilty of it? That we may be prepared to give a true answer to such questions, let us consider wherein the essence of this offence of the Apostle consisted, and by what steps he was led to its commission. His sin against his Master lay in his being ashamed and afraid to confess his connexion with him, when

taunted with it at a time when apparently confession could do Christ no good, and might damage greatly the confessor. It was rather shame than fear, let us believe, which led to the first denial. It was in moral courage, not physical, that Peter failed. By nature he was brave as he was honest. It was no idle boast of his, "Lord, I will follow thee to prison and to death." Had there been any open danger to be faced, can we doubt that he would gallantly have faced it? Had his Master called him to stand by his side in some open conflict with his enemies, would Peter have forsaken him? His was one of but two swords in the garden; those two against all the swords and other weapons of that multitude. But even against such odds, Peter, bold as a lion, drew his sword, and had the use of it been allowed, would have fought it out, till he had died by his Master's side. But it is altogether a new and unexpected state of things, this willing surrender of himself by Jesus into the hands of his enemies; this refusal, almost rebuke,

of any attempt at rescue or defence. It unsettles, it overturns all Peter's former ideas of his Master's power, and of the manner in which that power was to be put forth. He can make nothing of it. It looks as if all those fond hopes about the coming kingdom were indeed to perish. Confused, bewildered, Peter enters the High Priest's hall. Why should he acknowledge who he is, or wherefore he is there? What harm can there be in his appearing for the time as indifferent to Christ's fate as any of these officers and servants among whom he sits? That free and easy gait of theirs he assumes; goes in with all they say; perhaps tries to join with them in their coarse, untimely mirth. First easy yet fatal step, this taking on a character not his own. He is false to himself before he proves false to his Master. The acted lie precedes the spoken one; prepares for it, almost necessitates it. It was the rash act of sitting down with those men at that fireside, that assumption of the mask, the attempt to appear to be what he was not.

which set Peter upon the slippery edge of that slope, down which to such a depth he afterwards descended. Why is it we think so? Because we have asked ourselves the question, Where all this while was his companion John, and how was it faring with him? He too was within the hall, yet there is no challenging or badgering of him. The domestics of the dwelling indeed know him, and he may be safe from any interference on their part; but there are many here besides who know as little about him as they do about Peter. Yet never once is John questioned or disturbed. And why, but because he had joined none of their companies, had attempted no disguise; his speech was not heard bewraying him. Had you looked for him there, you would have found him in some quiet shaded nook of that quadrangle, as near his Master as he could get, yet inviting no scrutiny, exposing himself to no detection.

That first false act committed, how natural with Peter was all that followed! His

position, once taken, had to be supported, had to be made stronger and stronger to meet the renewed and more impetuous assaults. So is it with all courses of iniquity. The fatal step is the first one, taken often thoughtlessly, almost unconsciously. But our feet get hopelessly entangled; the weight that drags us along the incline gets at every step the heavier, till onward, downward we go into depths that our eyes at the first would have shuddered to contemplate, our souls revolting at the thought that we should ever have been found there. In this matter, then, of denying our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, let us not be high-minded, but fear; and, taking our special warning from that first false step of Peter, should we ever happen to be thrown into the society of those who bear no liking to the name or the cause of the Redeemer, let us beware lest, hiding in inglorious shame our faces from him, we be tempted to say or to do what for us, with our knowledge, would be a far worse thing to say or do, than what

was said and done by Peter, in his ignorance within the High Priest's hall.

The oaths with which he sealed his third denial were yet fresh on Peter's lips,* when a second time the cock crew without. And that shrill sound was yet ringing in his ears when "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." How singularly well-timed that look! The Lord is waiting till the fit moment come, and instantly seizes it. It might be wrong in us to say that but for the look, the second cock-crowing would have been as little heeded as the first. It might be wrong in us to say that, but for the awakening sound, the look would of itself have failed in its effect. But we can not be wrong in saying that the look and the sound each helped the other, and that it was the striking and designed coincidence of the two—their conjunction at the very time when Peter was confirming that third denial by those oaths—that formed the external agency which our Lord was pleased to con-

* "Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." Luke, xxii. 60. See also Matt., xxvi. 74.

struct and employ for stirring the sluggish memory and quickening the dead conscience of the apostle. And sluggish memories, dead consciences, are they not often thus awakened by striking outward providences co-operating with the Word and with the Spirit? Have none of us been startled thus, as Peter was, amid our denials or betrayals of our Master? Let us bless the instrument, whatever it may be, by which so valuable a service is rendered, and see in its employment only another proof of the thoughtful, loving care of him who would not let us be guilty of such offences without some means being taken to alarm and to recover.

Let us believe, however, that of the two—the sound and the look—the chief power and virtue lay in the latter. "The Lord turned." He turned from facing those scowling judges; from listening to all the false testimony brought forward against him; from bearing all the insults that masters and servants were heaping upon him; from all the excitements of a trial which he knew was to end in his

condemnation unto death. Forgetful of self, still thoughtful of his own, "He turned and looked upon Peter." Was that a look of anger; of unmingled, unmitigated rebuke? Such a look might have sent Peter away to hang himself as Judas did; but never to shed such tears of penitence as he went out to weep. The naked eye of the very Godhead might be on us; but if from that eye there looked out nothing but stern, rebuking, relentless wrath, the look of such an eye might scorch and wither, but never melt and subdue hearts like ours. Doubtless there was reproach in the look which Jesus bent upon Peter; gentle reproach, all the more powerful because of its gentleness. But that reproach, quickly as it was perceived, and keenly as it was felt, formed but the outward border or fringe of an expression, the body of which was tender, forgiving, sympathizing love. Volumes of pity and compassion lay enfolded in that look. It told the apostle how well He, of whom he had just been saying that he knew him not, knew *him;* how thoroughly he

knew him when he forewarned him of his fall. But it told Peter at the same time, that it was no thought or feeling of the injury or wrong that had been done personally to himself, which made Jesus fix now so earnest a gaze upon him. Not so much of himself as of Peter was he thinking: not for himself, but for Peter was he caring. It was the thought of that wrong which Peter had been doing to himself, which winged the look, and sent it on its hallowed errand into Peter's heart. He felt, as it fell upon him, that it was the look of one, not angrily complaining of injury, not indignantly demanding redress, but only longing for it that Peter might feel how unkindly, ungratefully, ungenerously, he had acted towards such a Master; of one who wished him above all things to be assured that if he but saw and felt his error, there was readiness and room enough in his heart to receive him back at once and fully into favor,—to forgive all, forget all, be all to him he had ever been. Another kind of look the apostle might have encountered unflinchingly,

but not a look like that. Instantly there flashed upon his memory those words of prophetic warning, spoken a few hours before in the guest-chamber. Thrice had Jesus forewarned him, that before the cock crew twice, he should thrice deny him. Had he never thought of these words till now? In the distraction of the moment he might have allowed the first cock-crowing to pass by unheeded, but how could that whole hour* which followed his two earliest denials have gone past, without the striking warning occurring once to his memory? Very strange it seems to us; but very strange are the moods and passions of the mind—what is remembered by it, and what forgotten, when some new strong tide of thought and feeling rushes into, fills, and agitates the soul. In the strange, unexpected, perilous position in which he had so suddenly been placed, Peter had forgotten all;—the meeting of the upper chamber, the triple warning, the "Verily verily, I say unto you," which had then sounded in his

* Luke xxii. 59.

ears. But now, as if the awakened memory, by the very fulness and vividness of its recall, would repair the past forgetfulness, he sees all, hears all again. Those words of warning are anew ringing in his ears, and as he thinks how fearfully exact the fulfilment of those forgotten predictions of his Master has been, a sense of guilt and shame oppresses him. He can bear that look no longer; he turns and hurries out of the hall, seeking a place to shed his bitter tears—tears not like those of Judas, of dismal and hopeless remorse, but of genuine and unaffected repentance. He goes out alone, but whither? It was still dark. The day had not yet dawned. He would not surely at such an hour, and in such a state of feeling, go back at once into the city, to seek out and join the others who had fled. Such deep and bitter grief as his seeks solitude; and where could he find a solitude so suitable as that which his Lord and Master had so loved? We picture him to our fancy as visiting alone the garden of Gethsemane, not now to sleep while his Lord is suffering; but to

seek out the spot which Jesus had hallowed by his agony, to mingle his tears with the blood-drops which still bedew the sod.

When and how he spent the two dismal days which followed we do not know. After that look from Him in the judgment-hall he never saw his Lord alive again. But as on the third morning we find John and him together, we may believe that it was from the the lips of the beloved disciple—the only one of all the twelve who was present at the trial before Pilate, and who stood before the cross—that Peter heard the narrative of that day's sad doings; how they bound and scourged and mocked and spat upon the Lord; how they nailed him to the cross, and set him up there in agony to die. And at each part of the sad recital, how would that heart, made so tender by penitence, be touched; how would it grieve Peter to remember that he too had had a share in laying such heavy burdens on the last hours of his Lord's suffering life! That Master whom he had so dishonorably and ungratefully denied,

was now sleeping in the grave. O but for one short hour with him—a single interview—that he might tell him how bitterly he repented what he had done, and get from his Master's living, loving lips the assurance that he had been forgiven! But that never was to be. He should never see him more. Never! grief-blinded man? Thine eye it sees not, thine ear it hears not, neither can that sorrow-burdened heart of thine conceive what even now Jesus is preparing for thee. The third morning dawns. The Saviour rises triumphant from the grave; in rising, sets the angels there as sentries before the empty tomb; gives to them the order that, to the first visitants of the sepulchre, this message shall be given: "Go, tell the disciples *and Peter*, that he is risen from the dead." This message from the angel, Peter had not heard* when he and John ran out together to the sepulchre, and found it empty. But he heard it not long thereafter. Who may tell what

* Mary Magdalene, on whose report they acted, had seen no angel on her first visit to the sepulchre.

strange thoughts that singling out of *him*—that special mention of his name by those angelic watchers of the sepulchre—excited in Peter's heart? How came those angels to know or think of him at such a time as this? It could not be on motion of their own that they had acted. They must have got that message from the Lord himself, been told by him particularly to name Peter to the women. But was it not a thing most wonderful, that, in the very act of bursting the barriers of the grave, there should be such a remembrance of him on the part of that Master whom he had so lately denied? Was it not an omen for good? Peter had his rising hopes confirmed, his doubts and fears all quenched, when, some time in the course of that forenoon, waiting till John and he had parted—waiting till he could meet him alone, and speak to him with all the greater freedom and fulness—Jesus showed himself to Peter. Before he met the others to speak peace, he hastened to meet Peter to speak pardon.

One of the first offices of the risen Saviour was to wipe away the tears of the penitent.

"Go your way," said the angel to the women at the sepulchre, "tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." The Paschal festival, and Christ's own presence, kept the apostles for eight days and more in the holy city. But as, after those two interviews in the evenings of the first two Lord's days of the Christian Church, Jesus did not appear to them again, presuming that he had gone before them to Galilee, the eleven also went thither. The return to their old homes and haunts, the sight of their nets and fishing-boats, the absence of any specific instructions as to what they were to be, or what to do in the future, suggest to some of them the thought of taking up again their earlier occupation. Seven of them are walking together one evening by the lake side. It is the best hour of all the day for fishing in it. The lake looks tempting; the boats and the nets are near. Peter

—the very one from whom we should have expected a first proposal of this kind to come —says to them, "I go a fishing." They all go with him. They toil all the night, but catch nothing. As morning breaks they see a man standing on the shore, seen but dimly through the haze, but near enough to let his voice be heard across the water. "Children," he says, "have ye any meat?" They tell him they have none. "Cast the net," he replies, "on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." And now they are not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. This could scarcely fail to recall to the memory of some at least within the boat, that other miraculous draught of fishes, by which, now nearly three years before, three out of the twelve apostles were taught to forsake all and follow Jesus, that he might make them fishers of men. This repetition of the miracle was nothing else than a symbolic renewal of that first commission, intended to teach the twelve that their apostolic calling still held good. There was one, however, of

the seven who gathered round Jesus at the morning meal which he spread for them on the shore, when their fisher's toil was over, whose position towards that commission and apostleship had become peculiar. He had been in the habit of taking a very prominent place among the twelve, had often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal, he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. They had all, indeed, forsaken their Master; but who would have thought that the very one of them who that night had been so vehement in his assertions that though all men, all his fellow-disciples, should forsake his Master, he never would, should yet so often, and with such superfluous oaths, have denied that he ever knew, or had anything to do with Jesus? True it was that Jesus had forgiven Peter. His fellow-disciples, also, had forgiven that overboastful magnifying of himself above the others. There was something so frank about him, and so genuine; such outgoings of an honest, manly,

kindly, generous nature, that they could not bear against him any grudge. They were all now on their old terms with one another. But how will it stand with Peter if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? How will he feel as to resuming his old position among the twelve? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust taught him by his great fall, shrink now from placing himself even on the same level with the others? And how will his Lord and Master feel and act as to his re-instatement in that office from which by his transgression he might be regarded as having fallen? To all these questions there were answers given, when Jesus, once more singling Peter out, said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas,"—the very giving him his old and double name sounding as a note of preparation, telling that some important question was about to be addressed to him,—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these," thy breth ren, my other disciples, do?—a gentle ye distinct enough reminder of that former say

ing: "Though all men should be offended, I never will;" a delicate yet searching probe, pressed kindly but firmly home into the depths of Peter's heart; a skilful method of testing and exhibiting the trueness and deepness of Peter's repentance, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having the terrible denials of his Master brought up and dwelt upon, either by Jesus in the way of charge, or by himself in the way of confession. The best way of trying any man whether he has really repented of any sinful deed is to place him again in the like circumstances, and see if he will act in the like manner. This is the way in which the Lord now tries Peter. Will he again compare himself with the others; will he set himself above them; will he say as much now about his love being greater than theirs, as he did then about his courage; will he repeat that boasting which which was the precursor of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the involved reference to the past; that he had

thoroughly learned its humbling lessons? No longer any comparing himself with or setting himself above others,—the old Peter-like frankness and fervor in the "Yea, Lord, I love thee," but a new humility in it, for he will not say how much he loves, still less will venture to say that he loves more than others; and a still deeper humility in it, for he will not offer his own testimony as to the love he feels, he will trust no more that deceitful heart of his, nor ask his Lord to trust it, but throwing himself upon another knowledge of that heart which had proved to be better than its own, he says, "Yea, Lord, *thou knowest* that I love thee." Our Lord's reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large, "Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me. I know, too, that thou wouldst make no boast of thy love, nor in that or anything else set thyself any longer above thy fellows; and now, that these thy brethren might know and see it too, how hearty thy penitence has been, how thorough-

ly it has done its humbling work, and how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being all to me thou ever wert; therefore now, in presence of these brethren, I renew to thee the apostolic commission—publicly re-instate thee in the apostolic office—'Feed my sheep.' I need not ask thee again whether thou lovest me more than others. I will prove thee no more by that allusion to the past; but I have once, twice, thrice to put that other general question to thee, that as three times I warned thee, and three times thou didst deny me, even so I may three times re-instate, restore." Can we wonder that Peter was grieved, when for the third time that question, Lovest thou me? was put to him. It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half-believed his word; but the grief of that contrition which grows into a deeper sadness at the so distinct allusion to his three denials in that triple repetition of the question. And yet even in that sadness there is a comfort; the comfort of the feeling that his affectionate

Master is giving him the opportunity of wiping away by threefold confession his threefold denial. And so, with a fuller heart, and in stronger words than ever, will he make avowal of his love : " Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee."

III.

The Trial before the Sanhedrim.*

The Jews regarded their day as beginning at one sunset and ending with the next. This interval was not divided into twenty-four parts or hours of equal and invariable length. They took each day by itself, from sunrise to sunset, and each night by itself, from sunset to sunrise, and divided each into twelve equal parts or hours; so that a Jewish hour, instead of being, as it is with us, a fixed measure of time, varied in its length as each successive day and night varied in theirs at different seasons of the year. Neither did the Jews begin as we do, reckoning the twelve hours, into which the day and night were respect-

* John xviii. 19–24; Luke xxii. 66–71; Matt. xxvi 59–68; Mark xiv. 53–65.

ively divided, from midday and midnight, but from sunset and sunrise; their sixth hour of the night corresponding thus with our twelve o'clock, our midnight; their sixth hour of the day with our twelve o'clock, our midday. There were but two periods of the year, those of the autumnal and vernal equinox, when, day and night being exactly equal, the length of the hours in both was precisely the same with our own. It was at one of these periods, that of the vernal equinox, that the Jewish Passover was celebrated, and it was on the day which preceded its celebration that our Lord was crucified. It was close upon the hour of sunrise on that day that Jesus was carried to the Prætorium, to be examined by the Roman Governor. Assuming that he entered Gethsemane about midnight, and remained there about an hour, the interval between the Jewish seventh and twelfth hour of the night, or between our one and six o'clock of the morning, was spent in the trial before Annas and Caiphas, both reckoned as High Priests, the one being such *de jure*, the

other *de facto*. They seem to have been living at this time in the same palace into the hall of which Jesus was carried immediately after his arrest. It was in this hall, and before Annas, that Jesus was subjected to that preliminary informal examination recorded in the eighteenth* chapter of the Gospel of St. John. He was to be formally tried, with show at least of law, before the Sanhedrim, the highest of the Jewish courts, but this could not be done at once. Some time was needed to call the members of that court together, and to consult as to the conduct of the trial. Annas was there from the first, awaiting the return of the band sent out to arrest the Saviour. His son-in-law Caiaphas was in all likelihood by his side, eager both and ready to proceed. But they could not act without their colleagues, nor pronounce any sentence which they might call upon the Roman Governor at once to ratify and execute. Whilst the messengers, however, are despatched to summon them, and the mem-

* John xviii. 19–24

bers of the Sanhedrim are gathering, Annas may prepare the way by sounding Christ, in a far-off, unofficial, conversational manner, and may perhaps extract from his replies some good material upon which the court may afterward proceed. Calling Jesus before him, he puts to him some questions about his disciples, and his doctrine; questions fair enough, and proper enough as to their outward form, yet captious and inquisitorial, intended to entangle, and pointing not obscurely to the two main charges to be afterwards brought against him, of being a disturber of the public peace, and a teacher of blasphemous doctrines.

First, then, about his disciples: Annas would like to know, what this gathering of men around him meant; this forming them into a distinct society. By what bond or pledge to one another were the members of this new society united; what secret instructions had they got; what hidden objects had they in view? Though Christ might not reveal the secrets of this combination, yet, let it but appear—as by his very refusal to give

the required information it might be made to do—that an attempt was here being made to organize a confederation all over the country, how easy would it be to awaken the jealousy of the Roman authorities, and get them to believe that some insurrectionary plot was being hatched which it was most desirable at once to crush, by cutting off the ringleader. Such we know to have been the impression so diligently sought to be conveyed into the mind of Pontius Pilate. And Annas began by trying whether he could get Jesus to say anything that should give a color of truthfulness to such an imputation. Penetrating at once this design of the questioner, knowing thoroughly what his real meaning and purposes were, our Lord utterly and indignantly denies the charge that was attempted thus to be fastened on him. Neither as to his disciples, nor as to his doctrine,—neither as to the instructions given to his followers, nor as to the bonds of their union and fellowship with one another, had there been anything of the concealed or the sinister; not one doc-

trine for the people without, and another for the initiated within; no meetings under cloud of night in hidden places for doubtful or dangerous objects. "I spake," said Jesus to this first questioner, "openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret"—that is, in the sense in which I know that you mean and use that term—"have I said nothing."

But now the questioner must have rolled back upon himself a question, which tells him how naked and bare that hypocritical heart of his lay to the inspection of the questioned: "Why askest thou me?" Put that question, Annas, to thy heart, and let it answer thee, if it be not so deceitful as to hide its secrets from thine own eyes. "Why askest thou me?" Art thou really so ignorant as thou pretendest to be; thou, who hast had thy spies about me for well-nigh three years, tracking my footsteps, watching my actions, reporting my words? "Why askest thou me?" Dost thou really care to know, as these

questions of thine would seem to indicate? then go, "ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." A boldness here, a touch of irony, a stroke of rebuke, which, perhaps, our Lord might not have used, had it been upon his seat and in his office as President of the Sanhedrim that the High Priest was speaking to him; had it not been for the mean advantage which he was trying to take of him; had it not been for the cloak of hypocrisy which, in trying to take that advantage, he had assumed. We shall see presently, at least, that our Lord's tone and manner were somewhat different when his more formal trial come on. Christ's sharp sententious answer to Annas protected him—and perhaps that was one of its chief purposes—from the repetition and prolongation of the annoyance. It seems to have silenced the High Priest. He had made but little by that way of interrogating his prisoner, and he wisely gives it up. Whatever resentment he cherished at being checked and spoken to in such a manner, he restrained

himself from any expression of it, biding the hour when all the bitter pent-up hatred at the Nazarene might find fitter and fuller vent.

But there was one of his officers who could not so restrain himself, who could not bear to see his master thus insulted, and who, in the heat of his indignation, struck Christ with the palm of his hand,—some forward official, who thought in this way to earn his master's favor, but who only earned for himself the unenviable notoriety of having been the first to begin those acts of inhuman violence with which the trial and condemnation of Jesus were so largely and disgracefully interspersed. Others afterwards came forward to mock and to jostle and to blindfold, and to smite and to spit upon our Lord, to whom he answered nothing; but, whether it was that there was something in this man which made our Saviour's words to him peculiarly needful and peculiarly appropriate, or whether it was that at this early stage of the proceedings Jesus was using the same freedom with the servant which he had used with the master,—when

he inflicted that first stroke, and said to Jesus, "Answerest thou the High Priest so?" —Jesus did not receive the stroke in silence. He answered the question by another: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Best comment this on our Lord's own precept: "If thy brother smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also;" and a general key to all like Scripture precepts, teaching us that the true observance of them lies not in the fulfilment of them as to the letter, but in the possession and exhibition of the spirit which they prescribe. How much easier would it be when smitten upon the one cheek, to turn the other for a second stroke, than to be altogether like our Lord in temper and spirit under the infliction of the stroke! More difficult, also, than any silence, to imitate that gentle answer. The lip might keep itself closed, while the heart was burning with anger. But it was out of the depths of a perfect patience, a gentleness which nothing could irritate, a condescension which stooped,

even while smitten, to remonstrate, that the saying came: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" "Think," says Chrysostom, "on him who said these words, on him to whom they were said, and on the reason why they were said, and these words will, with divine power, cast down all wrath which may rise within thy soul."

But now at last the whole Council has assembled, Caiaphas has taken his seat as President, and they may go more formally to work. Their object is to convict him of some crime which shall warrant their pronouncing upon him the severest sentence of the law. That the appearance of justice may be preserved,* they must have witnesses; these witnessess must testify to some speech or act of Christ, which would involve

* It would appear that in holding their Council during the night, and in condemning Christ solely upon his own confession, the Jews violated express enactments of their own code. See "Jésus devant Caïphe et Pilate—Réfutation du chapitre de M. Salvador, intitulé 'Jugement et Condamnation de Jésus,'" par M. Dupin.

him in that doom; and as to any specific charge, two of these witnesses must agree before they can condemn. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having within the last few days openly denounced themselves, the members of the Sanhedrim, as fools and blind, hypocrites, a very generation of vipers; but to have convicted Christ upon that count or charge would have given to their proceeding against him the aspect of personal revenge. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's having often broken and spoken slightingly of ordinances and traditions of the Pharisees; but there were Sadducees among their own members, and the Council might thus have been divided. They could have got plenty of witnesses to testify as to Christ's frequent profanation of the Sabbath; but how should they deal with those miracles, in or connected with the performance of which so many of these cases of profanation of the Sabbath had occurred? They are in difficulty about their witnesses.

They bring forth many; but either the charge which their testimony proposes to establish against Christ, comes not up to the required degree of criminality, or the clumsy testifiers, brought hastily forward, undrilled beforehand, break down in their witness-giving. Two, however, do at last appear, who seem at first sight to agree; but when minutely questioned as to the words which they allege that more than two years before they had heard him utter about the destruction of the Temple, they report them differently, so that "neither did their witness agree." The prosecution is in danger of breaking down through want of sufficient proof.

All this time, the accused has observed a strange—to his judges an unaccountable and provoking silence. He hears as though he heard not—cared not—were indifferent about the result. It is more than the presiding judge can stand. He rises from his seat, and, fixing his eyes on Jesus, says to him, "Answerest thou nothing?" Hast thou

nothing to say?—no question to put, no explanation to offer, as to what these witnesses testify against thee? Jesus returns the look, but there is no reply: he stands as silent, as unmoved as ever. Baffled, perplexed, irritated, the High Priest will try yet another way with him. Using the accustomed Jewish formula for administering an oath—a formula recited by the judge, and accepted without repetition by the respondent—"I adjure thee," said the High Priest, "by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Appealed to thus solemnly, by the first magistrate of his nation, sitting in presidency over the highest of its courts, our Lord keeps silence no longer. But it is in words of wonder that he replies to the High Priest's adjuration. He sees quite through the purpose of the questioner. He knows quite well what will be the immediate issue of his reply. Yet he says, "I am;" I am the Christ, the Son of the Blessed; "and ye"—ye who are sitting there now as my judges,—

"ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds to heaven." It is our Lord's own free and full confession, his public and solemn assertion of his claim to the Messiahship, and Sonship to God. The time for all concealment or reserve is past. Jesus will now openly, not only take to himself his own name, assume his office, and assert his Divine prerogatives, but in doing so, he will let those earthly dignitaries, who have dragged him thus to their tribunal, before whose judgment-seat he stands, know that the hour is coming which shall witness a strange reversal in their relative positions,—he being seen sitting on the seat of power, and they, with all the world beside, seen standing before his bar, as on the clouds of heaven he comes to judge all mankind.

The effect of this confession, this sublime unfolding of his true character, and prophecy of his second coming, was immediate, and though extraordinary, not unnatural. The High Priest, as soon as he drank in the real

meaning of the words which fell on his astonished ear, grasped his mantle, and rent it in real or feigned horror, exclaiming, "He hath spoken blasphemy." Then rose up also the other judges who were sitting round him, excited to the highest pitch, each one more eager than the other, to put this question to the accused, "Art thou then the Son of God?" to all of whom there is the same answer as to Caiaphas, "I am." "What further need, then," says the President of the Court to his brother judges, "have we of witnesses? Now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?" "What need we," they say to him, taking up his own words, "any further witnesses? for we ourselves have heard it out of his own mouth." And they "answered and said, He is guilty of death."* The unanimous judgment of the Court is delivered,† and the sentence of death pronounced.

Is there not one among all those judges within whose heart there rise some strange

* See Deut. xiii. 5; xviii 20. † Mark xiv. 64.

misgivings as he dooms this man to die; not one whom the calmness, the serenity, the dignified bearing of the Lord, as he made the great revelation of himself before them, have impressed with wonder and with awe? Perhaps there is; but the tumult of that vehement condemnation carries him away; or if any inward voice be pleading for the accused, he quenches it by saying that, if Jesus really submit to such a sentence being executed upon him, he cannot be the Messiah, he must be a deceiver; and so he lets the matter take its course.

The pronouncing of the sentence from the bench was the signal for a horrible outburst of coarsest violence in the hall below. As if all license were theirs to do with him what they liked—as if they knew they could not go too far; could do nothing that their masters would not approve, perhaps enjoy—the men who held Jesus* (for it would seem they could not trust him, bound though he was, to stand there free before them), began to mock

* Luke xxii. 63.

him, and to buffet him, and to spit upon him, and to cover his eyes with their hands, saying, as they struck at him, "Prophesy to us who it is that smiteth thee." "And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." How long all this went on we know not. They had to wait till the proper hour for carrying Jesus before the Roman Governor arrived, and it was thus that the interval was filled up; the meek and the patient One, who was the object of all this scorn and cruelty, neither answering, nor murmuring, nor resisting, nor reproaching. There was but one man in that hall to look with loving, pitying eyes on him who was being treated thus; and, in the words which that spectator penned long years thereafter in the distant lonely island, we may see some trace of the impression which the sight of the great sufferer made—"I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ."

The malignant antipathy to Christ cherished

by the hierarchical party at Jerusalem had early ripened into an intention to cut him off by death. It was at the beginning of the second year of his ministry that he healed the impotent man at the pool of Bèthesda. "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."* So far from repudiating this interpretation of his words, Jesus accepted and confirmed it; enlarging the scope, without altering the na-

* John v. 15–18. When, on a succeeding Sabbath Christ healed the man who had a withered hand, the Pharisees "were filled with madness, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him how they might destroy him."—Luke vi. 11; Mark iii. 6. Christ's movements were, from the beginning and throughout, more regulated by the pressure of the persecution to which he was exposed, than a cursory reading of the Gospel narrative might lead us to imagine.—See John ii. 24; iv. 1–3; Mark i. 45; Luke v. 17; xi. 53–56.

ture of what he had said about the Father, claiming not only unity in action, but unity in honor with him.* So vengeful in their hatred did the Jews of Jerusalem become, that Jesus had to seek safety by retiring from Judea. In the course of the two years which followed, Jesus paid only two visits to the metropolis, and both were marked by out breaks of the same implacable animosity. His appearance in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles excited such an instant and intense spirit of vindictiveness, that one of our Lord's first sayings to the Jews in the Temple was, "Why go ye about to kill me?" So well known was the purpose of the rulers that it was currently said, "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?"† Hearing that such things were said, the rulers sent their officers to seize him, but failed in the attempt to get him into their hands. They then confronted him in the

* John v. 33. † John vii. 25, 26.

Temple, and openly charged him with bearing a false record about himself. A strange dialogue ensued, in the course of which, instead of retracting any thing which he had formerly said, or attempting to explain it away, Jesus not only exalted himself above Abraham, in whom they boasted, but declared, in language which they could only understand as an assumption by him of Divine prerogatives: "Before Abraham was, I am." So exasperated were they when he said this, that they took up stones to cast at him; and had he not made himself invisible, and so passed through the midst of them, they would, in the heat of the moment, and without troubling themselves about any formal trial, have inflicted on him the doom of the blasphemer. Having lingered for a few days longer in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, wrought a memorable cure on the man born blind, and delivered that memorable discourse which John has preserved to us in the 10th chapter of his Gospel, Jesus again retired from the capital. On his return, two months afterwards, at the

Feast of Dedication, he was met as he walked in the Temple in Solomon's Porch, and with some show of candor and anxiety, the question was put to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus did not tell them so plainly as they desired, about his being the Christ, but he told them plainly enough, as he had done before, that he was the Son of God. "I," said he, "and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father: for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Again our Lord had to protect himself from the storm of their wrath by retreating to Peræa. The message from the mourning sisters recalled him from this retreat. The raising from the dead of a man so well known as Lazarus, in a village so near to Jerusalem as Bethany, produced such an effect that a

meeting of the Sanhedrim was summoned to deliberate as to what should be done. The design which they had so long cherished, they now more deliberately than ever determined to accomplish: "From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death."*

Though hurried at last in the time and manner of its execution, it was no hasty purpose on the part of the members of the Jewish Council to put our Lord to death. The proposal of Judas did not take them by surprise, the arrest in the garden did not find them unprepared. They must often have deliberated how they should proceed if they once had him in their hands. And when he was at last before them for formal trial, and they were eager to get him condemned, they had not for the first time to consider what charges they should bring against him, and by what evidence the charges might be sustained. Witnesses enough of all kinds were within their easy reach, nor had they any scruple as to the means they took to get from

* John xi. 53.

them the evidence they wanted. But with all their facilities, and all their bribery, they could not substantiate a single charge against Jesus which would justify them in condemning him. Why, when they found themselves in such difficulty, did they not summon into their presence some of those who had heard Jesus commit that kind of blasphemy, upon the ground of which they had twice, upon the spur of the moment, attempted to stone him to death? Testimony in abundance to that effect must have been lying ready to their hands. It seems clear to us that the first and earnest desire of the members of the Sanhedrim was to convict Christ of some other breach of their law, sufficient to justify the infliction of death; and that it was not till every attempt of this kind had failed, that, as a last resort, the High Priest put our Lord himself upon his oath. In the form of adjuration which he employed, two separate questions were put to Christ: the one, Whether he claimed to be the Christ; the other, Whether he claimed to

be the Son of God. These were not identical. The latter title was not one which either Scripture or Jewish usage had attached to the Messiah. The patent act of blasphemy which our Lord was considered as having perpetrated in presence of the Council was not his having asserted his Messiahship, but his having appropriated the other title to himself. When, after Christ had given his first affirmative reply to the complex challenge of Caiaphas, the other judges interfered to interrogate the prisoner, they dropped all allusion to the Messiahship. "Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?" and it was upon our Lord's reassertion that he was,—upon that, and that alone, that he was doomed to death as a blasphemer. For it was perfectly understood between the judges and the judged, that, in thus speaking of himself, Jesus claimed a peculiar, an intrinsic affinity,—oneness in essence, knowledge, power, and glory, with the Father. His judges took Jesus to be only man, and looking upon him as such, they were so far right

in regarding him as guilty of blasphemous presumption. In this, then, one of the most solemn moments of his existence, when his character was at stake, when life and death were trembling in the balance, Jesus, fully aware of the meaning attached by his judges to the expression, claimed to be the Son of God. He heard, and heard without explanation or remonstrance, sentence of death passed upon him, for no other reason whatever but his making that claim. On any other supposition than that of his having been really that which his judges regarded him as asserting that he was; on any other supposition than that of his true and proper Divinity, this passage of the Redeemer's life becomes worse than unmeaning in our eyes. There would be something more here than the needless flinging away of a life, by the absence of all attempt to remove the misconception (if misconception it had been), upon which the death sentence had been based. If only a man, if not the co-eternal, co-equal Son of the Father, in speaking of himself as he did before that

Jewish Council, Jesus was guilty of an extent, an audacity, an effrontery of pretension, which the blindest, wildest, most arrogant religious enthusiast has never exceeded. The only way to free his character as a man from the stain of such egregious vanity and presumption, is to recognize him as the Son of the Highest. If the Divinity that was in him be denied, the humanity no longer stands stainless.

But we believe in both, and see both manifested in the very scene that is here before our eyes. Now, with the eye of sense we look on Jesus as he stands before this Jewish tribunal. It is the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men; treated by those lordly judges, and the brutal band of servitors, as the vilest of felons, the very refuse of the earth. Again, with the eye of faith we look on him, and he seems as if transfigured before us, when, breaking the long-kept silence, he declares, "I am the Son of God, and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds

of heaven." From what a depth of earthly degradation, to what a height of superhuman dignity does Jesus at once ascend! And is it not striking to notice how he himself blends his humiliation and exaltation, his humanity and divinity, as he takes to himself the double title, and binds it to his suffering brow: *The Son of Man; the Son of God.*

IV.

Christ's First Appearance before Pilate.*

Christ's trial before the Jewish Sanhedrim, closed in his conviction and condemnation. The strange commotion on the bench, in the midst of which the sentence was pronounced, and the outbreak of brutal violence on the part of the menials in the hall, being over, there was an eager and hurried consultation as to how that sentence which had been pronounced could most speedily be executed. Had the full power of carrying out their own sentence been in their own hands, there had been no difficulty; Jesus would have been led out instantly to execution. But Judea was now under the Roman yoke; one bond and badge of its servitude being this, that

* Matt. xv. i.; Luke xxiii 1–4; John xvii. 28–39.

while the old Jewish courts were permitted to try and to punish minor offences, the final judgment of all capital offences was reserved for the Roman tribunals. A Roman judge must pass the sentence, or, at least, must sign the warrant that consigned the criminal to execution. At Jerusalem, these reserved cases were brought up for adjudication at the time of the great festivals, when the Roman Procurátor, who resided ordinarily at Cæsarea, visited the capital. For the last six years, Pontius Pilate had held this office in Judea, and he was now on occasion of this Passover in the city. His order, therefore, for the execution, must be obtained that forenoon, or perhaps not at all. It was now the last day before the Passover on which a court of justice could be held; and if not held before six o'clock that evening, when the Passover period began, then not for seven days thereafter. To keep Christ so long in bonds, awaiting his presentation to the Roman judge, —with an uncertainty, besides, whether Pilate would take up the case after the Passover,—

that were a risk too perilous to run. They had, indeed, the whole day before them, and there was time enough to get Pilate's judgment before the Passover commenced; but to keep Jesus not only bound, but bound with the order for his crucifixion hanging over him; to keep him so for eight days to come; to keep him so till not only citizens of Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of the whole region round about, had heard all the particulars of his apprehension and condemnation,—that also were peril which must, if possible, be avoided. And it could only be avoided by getting the crucifixion over before that sun which was just about to rise had set.

Obviously there was urgent need of haste. The consultation, therefore, was a brief and a hurried one. The resolution was taken to bind Jesus once more—bind him as men condemned to death were wont to be bound—and to carry him at once to Pilate, and get from him the authority to proceed. Thither, therefore, to the official residence of the Procurator, accompanied by the whole multitude

that had assembled in and around the hall of Caiaphas, Jesus is conveyed. It is a house which the Gentile has occupied and polluted; a house from which the leaven has not been cast out; a house to cross whose threshold at such a time as this, on the very eve of the Passover,—was to disqualify the entrant from all participation in the holy rite. And though there be among their number those who, from their position and previous acquaintance, might well have claimed the privilege of access, and asked a private audience of Pilate, to explain to him the nature of the case in which his interference at such an unseasonable hour was required, yet will not one of these precise, punctilious chief priests, scribes, and councillors venture into that dwelling, lest they should be defiled. They send in their message by some of Pilate's officers or servants. At once, with Roman courtesy, he comes out to them—to where they are all standing around the bound and sentenced Jesus. The glance of a quick eye at once revealed to Pilate the general object

of this early visit. These, he knew, as his eye ran round the leaders of the crowd, were the Jewish judges, and this, as that eye rested upon Jesus, some one whom they were anxious to get punished. But why all this haste? What can it have been that has brought together, at such an unusual hour, all these city magnates, and drawn them as suppliants to his door? What extraordinary crime can this man, whom they have borne to him, have committed, that they are so impatient to see him punished? He looks at Christ again. He had tried many; he had condemned many; his practised eye was familiar with the features which great guilt ordinarily wears, but he had never seen a great criminal look as this man looks; nothing here either of that sunk and hollow aspect that those convicted of great crimes sometimes show; nothing here of that bold and brazen front with which they still more frequently are wont to face their doom: he looks so gentle, so meek, so innocent, yet so calm, so self-possessed, so dignified. It does not seem that

Pilate knew at first who this bound one was that now stood there before him. He must have heard something, perhaps much, of Jesus of Nazareth before. He had been governor of the country all through the years of our Lord's public ministry, and it could scarcely be but that some report of his great sayings and doings must have reached his ear; but no more, perhaps, than Herod had ne ever met him—ever seen him face to face; nor does he yet know that this is he. He only knows and feels that never has his eye rested upon one more unlike a hardened reprobate than this. His curiosity roused, his interest excited, the favorable impression which this first sight of the accused has made, co-operating with the instinctive and official sense of justice, Pilate's first words to these judges and heads of the Jewish people are, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Was that question put in such a way, was it spoken in such a tone, or accompanied by such a look as to convey the idea that the questioner was not at once ready to believe that

any very heinous offence had been committed by that man? Perhaps it did carry with it some indication of that kind. But whether so or not, it indicated this, that Pilate meant to open up or re-try the case, or, at least, to get at and go over, upon his own account, the ground of their condemnation ere he ratified it. He could not but know—if he had not been distinctly told by the messengers whom the Jews sent to him, he saw it plainly enough in all the attendant circumstances—what it was that these Jews were expecting him to do. But he will do it in his own way. He will not sign off-hand, upon their credit and at their bidding, the death-warrant of a man like this. Had he been a judge of the purest and strictest honor, he would not have signed in such a hurried way the death-warrant of any one; but we know it from other sources, and the Jews who stood before him knew it too, that he was not such a judge, that he had often condemned without a hearing. And it is this which inclines us to believe that there was something in the very

first impression that our Lord's appearance made upon Pilate which touched the better part of his nature, and not only stirred within his heart the wish to know what it was of which they accused such a man, but also the desire to ascertain, for his own satisfaction, whether or not that accusation was well founded.

Obviously, to the men to whom it was addressed, Pilate's question was a disappointing one. They did not want, they had not expected, to be summoned thus to adduce and to substantiate some charge against Jesus, which, in Pilate's judgment, might be sufficient to doom him to death. They had hoped that to save himself the trouble of investigation, and in compliment to them at this Passover season—a compliment which, when it cost him nothing, they knew that he was quite willing to pay—he would take their judgment on trust and proceed upon it. And they still hope so. They will let Pilate know how good a right they have to expect this service at his hand; how much they will be offended

if he refuse it. When the question, then, is put to them, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" they content themselves with saying, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee," —words of haughtiness and injured pride. "Do you think that we, the whole assembled Sanhedrim; we, the very first men in this Jewish community over which you happen to have been placed; we, who have come to you, as we are not often wont to do, and are here before your gates to ask a very easy act of compliance with our will,—do you think that we would have brought this man to you, if we had not already ascertained his guilt? Do you think that we would either have ventured to offer such an insult to you, or ourselves perpetrate such injustice?" A very high tone this to take, which they have some hope will yet carry their point for them with the weak and vacillating governor. They are disappointed. They have stirred a pride that is equal to their own. If those Jews won't tell him what kind or degree of criminality it

is that they attribute to this man, he, Pilate, won't put himself as a blind tool into their hands. "If it be your judgment, and your judgment alone, that is to rule this man's case, 'Take ye him, then,' said Pilate, 'and judge him according to your own law;'"—a refusal on Pilate's part to do the thing which they first hoped that they might get him to do off-hand; a refusal to countersign their sentence, whatever it was, and by whatever evidence supported. It was as much as saying, that so far as he had yet heard or known any thing of this case, it was one which their own law, as administered by themselves, was quite competent to deal with.

Let them take this man, and judge him and punish him as they pleased, provided only that they kept strictly within the limits that their conquerors had laid down.—This were wholly to miss their mark. Their tone changes; their pride humbles itself. They are obliged to explain to the Governor, what he had known well enough from the first, but what they had not been candid enough to tell

him, that it was a sentence unto death which they wished to get executed, a sentence which they were not at liberty to carry out. This determination of Pilate to make personal inquiry into the grounds of that sentence, obliged them also to lodge some distinct and specific charge against Jesus;—one of such a kind that the Governor would be forced to deal with it; one too of sufficient magnitude to draw down upon it the punishment of death. Now mark the deep hypocrisy and utter falseness of these men. It won't do now to say that it was as a blasphemer, and as that alone, in calling himself the Son of God, that Jesus had been condemned before their bar. It won't do to let Pilate know anything of that one and only piece of evidence upon which their sentence has been founded. What cares he about that kind of blasphemy of which Jesus has been convicted; what cares that Roman law, of which he is the administrator, who or what any man thinks himself to be, or claims to be, in his relationship with God? Let any Jew be but

a good and faithful subject to Cæsar, and, so far as Cæsar or Cæsar's representatives are concerned, he may claim any rank he pleases among the gods. It was necessary, therefore, to draw the thickest veil of concealment over their own procedure as judges, although before the examination at this new bar was over, it oozed out that Jesus had made himself the Son of God,—with what strange effect upon Pilate's mind we shall presently see. But, in the first instance, some civil or political offence, some crime against the common law of the land, must be sought for to charge against Jesus. It was not easy to find or fabricate such a crime. Our Saviour had throughout most carefully and cautiously avoided everything like interference or intermeddling with, condemning or resisting, the ordinary administration of law, the policy and procedure of the government. He refused to entertain a question about the rights of inheritance between two brothers, saying to him who sought his interference, "Man, who made me a judge or a ruler over you?"

These very men, who are now about to frame their first accusation of him before Pilate, had tried to get him to pass his judgment upon the abstract question as to whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not, and had failed in their attempt to entangle him. What concealment, then, what deception, what effrontery of falsehood in it,—and it shows to what extremity they were driven,—that when forced to adduce some specific accusation, they said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King!" They here bring three different accusations against him, not one of which—in that sense in which alone they desire that Pilate should understand them—they know is true; and one of which, the central one of the three, they know is absolutely, and in every sense of it, false. But it suits their object to represent the accused to Pilate as a stirrer up of sedition, as a refuser to pay custom, as a denier of the Roman right to reign over

Judea, as a claimant to be king of the country, in his own person and of his own right. These, however, were charges which they knew that a Roman governor, whose chief business in their country was to see that the rights of the Emperor whom he represented should suffer no damage, could not pass by; charges by no means unlikely to be true, for Judea was at this time in a most unsettled state. There were multitudes of Jews who questioned Cæsar's right to tax them; multitudes who regarded him as a foreign usurper. Give them but a chance of success, and the great majority of the people would have risen then, as they rose afterwards, and risked their lives to regain their national liberties. One thing alone was suspicious—that such an accusation should come from such a quarter; that those leaders of the Jews should be so very eager to get a man punished for such a crime. It surely could not be so mighty an offence in their eyes. They were not themselves so very loyal to Rome as to be anxious to see a resister of the Roman power cut off.

Never before, at least, had they displayed any great zeal in that direction. Pilate had no faith in their sincerity. He saw through their designs. Perhaps it was now that, for the first time, he recognized that it was with Jesus of Nazareth, of whom he had heard so much, that he had to do. He did not entertain, because he did not believe, the charge of his being a seditious and rebellious subject. But there was one part of the accusation which was quite new to him, which sounded ridiculous in his ears, that this poor Nazarene should say that he was a king, the king of the Jews,—a very preposterous pretension; one sufficient of itself, if there was any real ground for saying that it ever had actually been set forth, to suggest a doubt as to whether Jesus was a fit subject for any judicial procedure whatever being taken against him. Overlooking all else that had been said against him, Pilate turns to Christ, and says to him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" He expected nothing else than to get an immediate disclaimer of the absurd

pretension. To his surprise, however, Jesus calmly and deliberately replies, "Thou sayest it,—I am the king of the Jews." Very curious this, to hear such a man, in such a condition, and in such circumstances, speak in such a way. He must be some egregious, designing, perhaps dangerous impostor, or, more likely, some wretched, ignorant, half-mad enthusiast or fanatic. He would like to search a little into the matter, and find out how it really stood. The man himself would in all likelihood be the first to supply the clue; he had so willingly and so calmly answered that first question that he would answer others. But it would be better to interrogate him alone, away from these accusers of his. He might not be so ready to answer further questions in their hearing, or they might interfere and prevent Pilate prosecuting the inquiry in his own way. He retires, therefore, to his own dwelling, into that part of it called and used generally as the Judgment Hall, and calls upon Christ to follow him. Jesus at once consents. *He* makes no scruple about cross-

ing that threshold: *he* fears no contagion from contact with the Gentile; his passover has been already held. And now, when they are alone, out of sight and out of hearing of those Jews, Pilate says again to him in a subdued and under-tone, as of one really anxious to get at the truth, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Waiving in the meantime anything like a direct reply, Jesus said to him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" 'Art thou but repeating the words of others, or art thou asking out of the depths of thine own inquiring spirit? Hast thou too, Pilate, for that unruled, unruly spirit of thine, felt the inward need of some one to be its Governor and Lord? Lies there behind the outward form and meaning of that question of thine, the indistinct, the inarticulate longing after another king and another kingdom than either Jews or Romans own?' Was there indeed, for one passing moment, far down in the depths of Pilate's struggling thoughts, an element of this kind at work; and did Jesus, knowing that it was there, try

thus to bring it up, that he might proceed to satisfy it? If so, what a moment of transcendent interest to the Roman judge, of which, had he but known how to take advantage, he too might have entered the kingdom, and shared its securities and blessedness. But he does not, he will not stoop to acknowledge, what we suspect was true, that there did mingle in the thoughts and feelings of that moment some element of the kind described. This is too personal, too bold, too home a question of the Nazarene. The pride of the Roman, the judge, swells up within his breast, and quenches the interests of the man, the sinner—and so he haughtily replies: "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" The chance of reaching the individual conscience of the questioner has passed away; the trial has been made, and it has failed; Jesus must take up the question not as one between him and Pilate—between Pilate's conscience and Pilate's God—but as one simply between himself as a sen-

tenced criminal, and those Jews without, who are his accusers. He will not answer the last question of the Governor, "What hast thou done?"—upon that he will not enter; it would be of no avail; but he will satisfy Pilate upon one point. He will convince him that he has committed no political offence; that he never meant to set himself in opposition to any of this world's governments. "My kingdom," said he, "is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence:" a kingdom rising up among the others of the world, to struggle for its existence, to establish, to protect, to extend itself, by earthly weapons, by outward force of any kind,—not such is that kingdom which I Jesus call my own.

But if not, what kind of kingdom can it be? what kind of king is he who rules it? So far satisfied, yet still wondering and perplexed, Pilate puts his question, not in its first specific form, but in a more general one:

"Art thou a king then?" "If not a king, like our own Cæsars or your own Herods, if not a king to fight with rival sovereigns, or ask thy subjects to fight for thee, then in what sense a king?" Our Lord's reply, we can perceive, was particularly adapted to the position, character, acquirements, experience of his questioner,—a Roman official of high rank, educated, cultivated; a man of affairs, of large experience of men—men in different countries and of different creeds; not given much, perhaps, to any deep or serious thought about religious matters, yet sufficiently acquainted with the rival schools of philosophy and religion by which the then great living Roman commonwealth was divided and distracted. Truth, moral truth, religious truth, was the one proclaimed object of research, of which some were saying, Lo, here it is, and others, Lo, there it is; but of which he, Pilate, in pursuit of quite a different object, had learned to think that neither here nor there nor anywhere was it to be found. It is to this man that Jesus says, speaking in the

language that would be most intelligible to him: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." As these words fell upon the ear of Pilate, one can well enough imagine that the current of his thoughts ran thus:—"It is even as I suspected; here is another of these pretenders, who each would have us to believe that he alone had discovered the undiscoverable, that he alone has found out and got exclusive possession of *the truth;* here is a new Jewish rival of those old Stoics of our own, who were ever teaching us that every wise man was a king,—the setter up of a new system, which he imagines is to dethrone every other one that the world before has seen, whose fancy is that he himself is already upon the throne of his great kingdom,—some poor egotistical, yet quite harmless enthusiast, whose day-dream who would wish to break? One thing, at least, is clear enough, that it is a quite

empty, hollow charge these Jews are urging here against him. He may sit as long as he likes upon that ideal throne of his, without the throne of Tiberius being endangered; he may get as many subjects as he can to enter that ideal kingdom of his, and my master, the Emperor, have not a loyal subject the less." And so with that passing question to Jesus, "What is truth?"—a question he does not stay to get answered, as he has no faith that any answer to it can be given; a question not uttered sneeringly or scoffingly, but rather sadly and bitterly, so far as he himself is concerned, having come to regard all truth as a phantom; and with a kindly, tolerant, half-pitying, half-envious feeling towards Jesus,—with that question put to Jesus by the way, Pilate goes out to the Jews, and says to them boldly and emphatically, "I find in him no fault at all;"—the faultlessness of Christ acknowledged, his kingly claims scarcely comprehended, and so far as comprehended, rejected, perhaps despised.

Let each of us now ask himself, How

stands it as to me and this kingdom of the truth, this one great King of the true? Is Jesus Christ to me the way, the truth, the life? Does truth, simple, pure, eternal truth, stand expressed and exhibited to me in those words, those prayers, those acts, those sufferings, that life, that death, of Jesus Christ? The witness that he bore to the truth, in the living of that life and the dying of that death, —have I listened to it, and believed in it, and submitted to it? Am I of the truth; a simple, humble, earnest seeker after it; and have I this evidence of my being so, that I hear the voice of Jesus, hear it and hail it, among all the conflicting voices that are falling on my ear, as the voice of him who rightfully claims the lordship of my soul? Is truth—the truth as to God, my Creator, my Father, my Redeemer; the truth as to myself, what I am, what I ought to be, what I may be, what I shall be,—is this truth not a mere form of sound words, not a mere congeries of acknowledged or accepted propositions; but does it stand before me embodied

in the person, the life, the death, the meditation of Jesus Christ; and have I enshrined and enthroned him as King and Lord of my weak, my sinful, my immortal spirit?

V.

Christ's Appearance before Herod.*

Jesus had spoken quite frankly and openly to Pilate when they were together, out of sight and hearing of the Jews, alone in the Judgment Hall. It was quite different when, accompanied by Christ, Pilate came out again to the attendant crowd, and boldly said to them, "I find no fault in this man." So far, then, the Chief Priests and Elders have failed. Failure always embitters. Failure here was what these men were by no means disposed to submit to. Pilate's assertion of his belief in the innocence of Jesus only made them the more vehement in their assertion of his criminality. They became the more fierce. They

* Matt. xxvii. 12, 13 Mark vi. 14–16; Luke ix. 7–9; xiii. 31, 32, xxiii. 4–12.

accused him, Mark tell us, of many things. But the waves and the billows of this swelling wrath of theirs broke harmlessly upon Christ. So absent, so unmoved, so indifferent did he appear, that it seemed as if he had not heard what they were saying against him, or hearing had not understood, or understanding had not heeded. Very different his retirement into himself,—this unruffled composure, this unbroken silence, from those eager and animated utterances to which the Governor had just been listening in the hall within. Perhaps it is wounded pride that seals the lips of Jesus. To men like these, animated by such a bitter personal hostility to him, exhausting every epithet of vituperation, heaping upon him all kinds of charges, Jesus may not choose to condescend to give any answer. But he has not treated, will not treat, the Roman governor in the same way; at least will surely tell him why it is that he preserves this silence. Pilate says to him, "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" There is no reply.

The lips are as shut at the question of Pilate as at the accusation of the Jews. Christ has said all that he meant to say, done all that he meant to do, so far as those charges were concerned that they were now bringing against him. He had answered to the Roman judge that the kingship which he claimed was not of a kind in any way to interfere with this world's governments; he had satisfied him of his perfect innocuousness as a subject of the State; and, having done that, he would say and do no more.

One observes an almost exact parallel as to his silences and his speakings in our Lord's conduct before the Jewish and the Gentile courts of justice. In that preliminary unofficial conversation he held with Annas before the Sanhedrim sat in judgment on his case, Jesus had spoken without reserve, had answered the High Priest's questions but too fully, and had brought down upon himself the stroke of the officer who stood by. But when the regular trial commenced, and charges were formally brought forward, and

attempted by many witnesses to be substantiated, Jesus held his peace, so long and so resolutely, manifesting so little disposition or desire to medde in any way with the procedure that was going on, that the High Priest rose from his seat in the midst, and put to him a question of the same import with that which Pilate afterwards put; and the two questions met with the very same treatment,—to neither of them a single word of reply was given. But when the High Priest rose, and solemnly adjured Jesus to tell whether he was the Christ the Son of God, just as when Pilate asked whether he was the King of the Jews, and what kind of king he was, our Lord made instant and distinct and unambiguous reply. So far as we can see or understand the principle ruling here the Saviour's conduct, determining the time to speak and the time to be silent, it was this: that when the matter immediately and directly concerns his Divine Sonship and Kingship, he will help his judges in every way he can; nay, he will himself supply the

evidence they want. Upon that count he will allow himself to be condemned; he will co-operate with his enemies in the bringing about of his condemnation; but of all these other lesser trifling charges he will take no account; but leave all their manifold attempts to fasten on him any other kind of charge, to break down of themselves, that, his enemies themselves being witnesses, it might be solely and alone as the Son of God, the King of Israel, that he should be convicted, condemned, and crucified.

Among the many things that the Chief Priests were now accusing Jesus of in the presence of the Governor, hoping still to convince Pilate that he was not the guiltless man that he had taken him to be, there was one thing that they put prominently forward, presented in every form, amplified in every way, on which they mainly relied in their dealings with Pilate,—the setting forth of Christ as a ringleader of sedition. "He stirreth up the people," stirreth them up against the constituted authorities, preaching rebel-

lion through the whole country, not here in Judea alone, but there also in Galilee where he began this work. This allusion to Galilee as the birthplace of the alleged seditious movement may have been accidental; they may have meant merely thereby to signify how widespread the evil had been which they were calling upon Pilate to check; or it may have been done designedly, with that art which was to leave nothing unsaid or unsuggested, by which the Governor could possibly be influenced. Galilee might have been named by them, to suggest to Pilate how difficult it was to produce proof of crime committed in so remote a district; or to remind him that this Galilee, upon which so much of Christ's time and labor had been spent, was the chosen haunt of the resisters of the Roman authority, the cradle of most of the seditious plots concocted against the Emperor's government; or they might have known of the bad feeling that there was at this time between Pilate and the King of Galilee, and might have imagined that it would be

rather gratifying to Pilate than otherwise to lay his hand judicially upon one who might be regarded as a subject of that prince.

However it was, no sooner had the words escaped their lips, than a happy thought suggests itself to Pilate. He is in great difficulty with this case; he knows not how to deal with it. He had never been so importuned as he now was by those Chief Priests and elders; he never saw them more bent on anything than on the death of this man whom they have brought to him; it would be easy to give him up to their vengeance—he had done as much as that before;—but he was convinced of this man's innocence; there was something too, so peculiar about his whole look, bearing, and conduct, that he could not make up his mind to have any share in sending him to be executed as a common criminal. But now he hears, that part at least, perhaps, the greater part of the offence that these were alleging he had committed, had taken place in Galilee, in that part of the country which was not under his jurisdiction, but belonged

to that of Herod. This Herod, the King of Galilee, happened at this very time to be in Jerusalem. Pilate will send the case to him; and thus get the responsibility of deciding it shifted from his own shoulders, by laying it upon one who not only may be quite willing to assume it, but may regard as a compliment the reference of the case to his adjudication. There was a misunderstanding between the two—the Roman Procurator and the Galilean king—which the sending of Jesus to the latter for trial might serve to heal. Pilate had done something to displease Herod,—something, in all likelihood, in the very way of interfering with what Herod regarded as his rights, and the rights of his subjects. Some Galileans had been up lately at Jerusalem, offering sacrifice there. There had been a riot, which Pilate had promptly and summarily quelled; but in doing so he had mingled the blood of some of these Galileans with their sacrifices—cut them down without inquiring whose subjects they were, or what right they might have to demand a trial in

one or other of the Herodian courts. For this, or such-like imagined interference with his jurisdiction, Herod had taken offence at Pilate. It would be, then, the very kind of compliment most soothing to his kingly vanity, this recognition of his jurisdiction, by sending to him so notorious a person as Jesus was, to be tried at his bar. Herod recognised and appreciated the compliment; and whatever else Pilate lost by the line of conduct he pursued that day, he at least gained this,—he got that quarrel between him and Herod healed.

The happy thought no sooner occurs to Pilate than he acts upon it. And now, guarded by some Roman soldiers, accompanied by the whole crowd of his accusers, Jesus is despatched to Herod. To enter into the scene that follows, we must go back a little upon this Herod's history. How John the Baptist and he became first acquainted, we are not told. A part of the territory (Peræa) over which Herod's jurisdiction extended, ran down along the eastern shore of the Dead

Sea, and it is probable that it was in some of the circuits that he made of this district that he first fell in with the Baptist, engaged in his great ministry of repentance. Herod was greatly struck alike with the man and with his teaching. There was a strange fascination about both which drew the attention of the King. As there was nothing about John's ministry to excite or gratify either the intellect or the fancy,—no miracles wrought, no new doctrines propounded, no vivid picturing employed; as all was so purely moral, so plain, so pointed, so practical in his teaching, we must believe that what at first drew Herod to John, and made him listen with such pleasure, was that it was a faithful portraiture of men that John was drawing, an honest and fearless exposure of their sins that he made. Herod both admired and approved; but the pleasure that he had in observing John, and in listening to his instruction, was by no means a pure or untroubled one. He feared John, we are told, knowing that he was a just man and a holy. This fear was the fruit of

guilt. He knew and felt what a different man John was from himself. The very presence of the Baptist was a rebuke, and he was not yet so hardened as to receive that rebuke without alarm. Nor did this first connexion of the King with the Baptist terminate in the mere excitement of certain emotions, whether of respect, or admiration, or fear. Herod did many things, we are told, at John's bidding. I imagine that, in the first stage of their intercourse, John dealt with Herod as he dealt with the Pharisees, and the soldiers, and the publicans; that he laid his hand upon those open and patent offences which as a ruler, and in common with others holding that office, Herod notoriously was guilty of. The King not only suffered him to do so, but even went the length of reforming his conduct in some respects, in obedience to the Baptist's instructions. But John did not stop there—did not stop where Herod would have liked; but, stepping boldly into the inner circle of his private life, and laying his hand upon the stain which disfigured it, he said to him, "It

is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

In all likelihood Herodias was not with Herod when first he met the Baptist, and heard him so gladly, and did many things at his bidding. This meeting may have happened in the wilderness, where Herod ranked but as one of John's large and public audience. But the King invited the Baptist to his court, and it was there, perhaps in presence of Herodias, that the rebuke of that particular transgression was given. Herod's anger was kindled at what appeared an impertinent and officious intermeddling with his private conduct, his family affairs. And there was one beside him who resented that intermeddling still more than he, and was at pains to excite and to nurse his wrath. Herodias would have made short work of it with this sharp reprover; she would have sealed those lips of his at once in death, so that she should no more be troubled with their unwelcome utterances; and Herod would have yielded to her desire, notwithstanding all his earlier

readiness to hear and to obey, notwithstanding all his respect and regard for John; but he feared the multitude, and, yielding to that fear, he made a compromise—he cast John into prison, and kept him there for months. But months could not quench the thirst for his blood that had been stirred in the heart of that second Jezebel; still she was asking for the head of the Baptist, but Herod would not yield,—took no little credit to himself, we may believe, for being so firm, and, forgetting that it was the fear of the multitude that overbalanced the influence of the Queen, might have come to persuade himself that he was dealing very gently and tenderly with the Baptist. But the Queen knew him better than he knew himself, and so with diabolic art contrived the plot that was to bring another and still weightier fear, to overbalance in its turn that fear of the multitude.

All went as she desired. The evening for the royal supper came; the chief men of Galilee, with the king in high good-humor at their head, sat down at the banqueting-table.

Salome entered, and danced before them; the guests, heated with wine, broke out into rapturous applause. In a transport of delight, the King made the fatal promise, and confirmed it with an oath, that he would give her whatsoever she should ask. Salome went out to consult her mother as to what her request should be. There was little time spent in deliberation. The Queen's reply was all ready, for she had conjectured what would occur, and so Mark tells, Salome came in straightway unto the King, and said, Give me here John the Baptist's head upon a charger. The King was taken in the snare; no time for thought was given, no way of escape left open. There was the oath which he had taken; there were the witnesses of that oath around the board. He could not break his oath without standing dishonored before those witnesses. The fear of the multitude is overborne by a still higher fear. He gives the order, and the deed is done. Unhappy man! entangled, betrayed by his own rash vow; his very sense of honor turned into the

instrument that makes of him a murderer! Herod was exceeding sorry; he knew well how wrong a thing it was that he was doing; it was with bitter self-reproach that the order for the execution was given. For a short time there were the stings of remorse, but these soon lost their power. John was beheaded, and no manifestation of popular displeasure made. John was beheaded; Herodias and Salome were satisfied, and Herod himself could not but acknowledge that there was a kind of relief in knowing that he should be troubled by her no more about him. Remorse died out, but a strange kind of superstitious fear haunted Herod's spirit. Reports are brought to him of another strange teacher who has arisen, and to whom all men are now flocking, as they had flocked to the Baptist at the first. And Herod says, "John have I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?"

What perplexed him was, that it was said by some that John was risen from the dead, by some that Elias had appeared, by others

that one of the old prophets had arisen. Herod hesitated for a time which of these suppositions he should adopt; but at last he adopted one of them, and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." He desired to see him; a desire in which there mingled at the first so much of awe and dread, that he rather shunned than courted an interview; so much so, that when Christ came afterwards into Galilee, and there was some prospect they might meet, he had in a very artful way, by working on Christ's fears, persuaded him to withdraw from that part of the country. He sent some Pharisees, who said to Jesus, "Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee." Herod never could have really meditated such a deed. We know that afterwards when it was in his power, he declined taking any part in the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus. It was but a cunning device intended to get Herod out of the embarrassments in which he found that Christ's

residence and teaching in the territory within his jurisdiction might involve him. And so Jesus seems to have dealt with it, when he said to the Pharisees, whom he at once recognized as the agents of the King: "Go," said he, "and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected,"—'my times and places for working and for finishing my work, are all definitely arranged, and that quite independently of any stratagem of this cunning king.'

At last, at an unexpected time and place, and in an unexpected way, Jesus is presented to him; presented by Pilate; presented to be tried; presented as a criminal at the bar, with whom he may use the greatest freedom, as Jesus will surely be anxious to say and do all he can in order to obtain his release. Herod, therefore, when he sees Jesus thus placed before him, is exceedingly glad,—he had heard so much about him, had desired so long to see him. But now, as indicating at once the state of mind and heart into which

worldliness indulged, and levity and licentiousness, have sunk this man, and as supplying to us the key that explains our Lord's singular conduct to him, let us particularly notice, that in the gladness which Herod feels in having the desire to see Christ thus gratified, there mingles no wish to be instructed, no alarm of a guilty conscience, no dread of meeting another Baptist to rebuke him for his iniquities. He has got over whatever compunction he may at one time have felt. He has quenched those risings of remorse within his heart. He has come to be once more on such good terms with himself; so much at ease, that when he looks at Jesus, it is with no disturbing remembrances of that bloody head once brought to him upon the charger,—no shrinking dread that he may see again the Baptist's form, and hear again the Baptist's voice. It is with an eager, idle, prurient curiosity—having a tinge, perhaps, of superstitious wonder in it, that he looks upon Jesus, and proceeds to put his questions to him. As compared with John, this new teacher had

been distinguished by the miracles which he had wrought. And if he wrought miracles to save others, surely he will work some to save himself. Herod tries in every way he can think of, to induce him to work some wonder in his presence. How does Jesus act when addressed and treated thus by such a man? Shall it be as if the Baptist had indeed risen from the dead? Will Jesus seize upon the opportunity now given, to take up, reiterate, and redouble upon the profligate prince the rebuke of his great forerunner? Shall Herod hear it said to him now, in tones more piercing than ever John employed, It was not lawful for thee to take the Baptist's life? Not thus does Jesus act. Herod puts question after question to him. Jesus looks at the questioner, but opens not his lips. Herod asks and asks again, that some sign may be shown by Jesus, some token of his alleged power exhibited. Jesus never lifts a finger, nor makes a single movement, in compliance. Herod is the only one of all his judges whom Jesus deals with in this way,—

the only one of them before whom, however spoken to, he preserves a continuous and unbroken silence. It does not appear that, from the time when he was presented to Herod, to the time when he was sent away from him, a single word ever passed the Saviour's lips.

That deep and death-like silence, the silence of those lips which opened with such pliant readiness when any word of gentle entreaty or hopeful warning was to be spoken, how shall we interpret it? Was it indignation that sealed those lips? Would Christ hold no intercourse with the man who had dipped his hands in such blood as that of the Baptist? Did he mean to mark off Herod as the one and only man so deeply stained with guilt that he will not stoop to exchange with him a single word? It had been human this, but not divine; and it is a divine meaning that we must look for in this dread and awful silence. There lived not, there breathed not upon the earth the man, however steeped in guilt, from whom that loving Saviour would have turned away, had but the

slightest sign of penitence been shown, the slightest symptom of a readiness to listen and be saved. It was no bygone act of Herod's life that drew down upon him the doom of that silence—though doom it little seemed to him to be; it was the temper and the spirit of the man as he stood there before the Lord, after all that he had passed through; it was that which did it. Why, the very sight of Jesus, connected, as he knew or fancied him, in some mysterious way with John, should have been to Herod as though one risen from the dead had actually appeared in his presence. It should have been he, not Jesus, that should have been speechless when they met; or, if he spake at all, it should have been to ask whether, in that world of spirits from which Christ came, there was mercy for a sinner such as he. But, instead of this, instead of anything like this, instead of deep or earnest or anxious feeling of any kind, there is nothing but a vain-glorious wish to have his kingly pride gratified by some talk with this strange man, with whose name and

fame all the country has been ringing, the babblings of an empty curiosity, the thirst for some showy exhibition of knowledge or of power. Let not that man think that he shall hear anything of the Lord. Christ could have spoken such a word as Herod never would have liked to hear again; he could have wrought such a miracle as would have turned the curiosity of the king into terror, his pride into abasement. But he is now to reap the fruit of his own doings, and that fruit is even this, that he is left unspoken to by the Lord from heaven. This silence, had he but interpreted it aright, was perhaps the very instrument most fitted to speak home to his conscience and his heart. But he did not understand it, did not enter into the reason of it, never thought of his own past conduct, his own present character, as the cause of it; it stirred him to no inquiry, it awakened in him no remorse. The only feeling that it appears to have produced was irritation; the irritation of mortified vanity. Greatly galled, yet in no way soft-

ened, when he could make nothing of this mysterious man who mantled himself in such obstinate silence, he and his men of war found nothing else to do than to set Christ at naught, and mock him, and array him in a white robe, and send him back to Pilate.

A wonderful instance this of the onward, downward course of crime, particularly of that peculiar course of crime, levity, and licentiousness, which Herod had pursued; an instance how speedily and how thoroughly a human heart may harden itself against reproof, quench its convictions, get over its fears, and bring down upon itself that doom, than which there is none more awful,—Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone. To be left utterly and absolutely alone; to have all the voices that speak to us of God and duty, the voice of conscience from within, the voice of providence from without, the voice which comes from the lips of Jesus,—to have all these voices hushed, hushed into an unbroken, perhaps eternal stillness; can one conceive any condition of a human spirit

sadder or more awful? Yet this is the very condition to which the abuse of opportunity, the indulgence of passion, the drowning of the voices when they do speak to us, is naturally and continually tending.

My young friends let me entreat you especially to take a double warning from such a case as this:—1st. Beware how you deal with your first religious convictions; tremble for yourselves if you find them dying by a slow death, as the withering, hardening spirit of worldliness creeps in upon your soul, or perishing suddenly amid the consuming fires of some burning passion. They tell us that there is no ice so close and hard as that which forms upon the surface which once was thawed; and there is no hardness of the human spirit so great as that which forms over hearts that once had melted. And, 2d, Beware of hot fits of enthusiasm, in which you go farther in profession than you are prepared to go in steady and sustained practice. Herod went too far at first, and got himself involved among obligations and re-

straints from which, when the hour of temptation came, he flung himself free by an effort which damaged his moral and spiritual nature more than it had been ever damaged before; his revulsions from religion all the greater on account of the temporary and partial, but hollow and merely emotional entertainment that he had given to its claims. What you do, do it with all your heart; for it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; but do it intelligently, calmly, deliberately, as those who know and feel that it is the greatest of all transactions that you engage in, when it is with God and for your soul's eternal welfare that you transact.

VI.

Christ's Second Appearance before Pilate.*

"THIS child," said good old Simeon, as he took up the infant Jesus into his arms to bless him—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Never were those words more strikingly fulfilled than in these closing scenes of the Saviour's life which we are now engaged in tracing. Then many fell,—those forsaking, despairing disciples of Jesus,—but fell to rise again; then was that sign set up, against which so many shafts of so many kinds were launched; and then were the thoughts of

* Luke xxiii. 13–16; Matthew xxvii. 15–23; Luke xxiii. 20–23; Matthew xxvii. 26–30; John xix. 1–16.

many hearts revealed—among others those of Judas, and Peter, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate—revealed by the very closeness of their contact with Christ, by the peculiarity of those relationships to him into which they were then thrown. Last Sunday our attention was concentrated upon Herod; to-day let us fix our eyes on Pilate, and, taking him up at that stage where we left him, let us try to understand and to follow the working of his thoughts and feelings during those two hours of their earthly lives in which he and Jesus had to do with one another—he in the character of the judge, Jesus in the character of one accused and condemned by the Sanhedrim.

You will remember that when first he heard among the other accusations that the High Priests lodged against him, that Jesus had said that he himself was Christ a King,—struck at once with the singularity of the pretension, and with the appearance of the man who made it, Pilate called on Christ to follow him into the inner hall of his residence; that

there, when alone with him, omitting all reference to any other charge, he asked him particularly about this one; that Christ fully satisfied him as to there being nothing politically dangerous or offensive in the claim to kingship he had put forth; that, bringing Christ out along with him to the Jews, he said at once and decidedly, "I find no fault in this man;" and that then, taking advantage of a reference to Galilee, he had sent Jesus off to Herod, to see what that Galilean king and judge might think and do. In this way he hoped to be relieved from the painful and embarrassing position in which he felt himself to be placed.

He was disappointed in this hope. Jesus was sent back to him by Herod; sent back without any judgment having been pronounced; sent back in such a way as to indicate that Herod as well as he made light of this poor Galilean's pretension to be a king,—thought it, in fact, more a matter for mockery and ridicule than for serious judicial entertainment. Although a considerable body of

the High Priests and of the people had accompanied Jesus to and from the bar of Herod, yet in that interval there had been to some extent a scattering of the crowd. Pilate called, therefore, now afresh together the Chief Priests, and the rulers, and the people —the latter particularly mentioned, as Pilate had now begun to think that his best chance of gaining the end upon which his heart was set,—the deliverance of Christ out of the hands of his enemies,—would be by appealing, over the heads of their rulers, to the humanity of the common people. When all, then, were again assembled, he made a short speech to them, reiterating his own conviction of Christ's innocence, confirming it by the testimony of Herod, and closing by a proposal that he hoped would be at once accepted,—I will therefore chastise him, and release him. But why, if he were innocent, chastise him at all? Why not at once acquit the culprit, and send him away absolved from the bar of Roman judgment? It was a weak and unworthy concession, the first faltering

of Pilate s footstep. He cannot but say that he has found nothing worthy of death in this man; he is himself thoroughly satisfied that there is nothing worthy of any punishment in him; but it will please his accusers, it will conciliate the people, it may open the way to their readier acquiescence in his after dismissal, to inflict some punishment upon him; a proposal not dictated by any spirit of cruelty, springing rather from the wish to protect Jesus from the greater penalty, by inflicting on him the less; yet one that weakened his position, that made those sharp-sighted Jews at once perceive that he could be moved, that he was not ready to take up and stand firmly and fixedly upon the ground of Christ's innocence. In deference to them, he has gone so far against his own convictions; he may go farther. He has yielded the inch, they may force him to yield the ell. The proposal, therefore, of chastising Jesus, and letting him go, is rejected, and rejected so as to throw Pilate back upon some other, some new device.

He recollected that at this time of the Passover it was a customary thing, in compliment to the great assembly of the Jews in their metropolis, for the Procurator to arrest in a single instance the ordinary course of justice, and to release whatever prisoner the people might ask to be given up. He recollected at the same time that there was a notable prisoner, who then lay bound at Jerusalem, one Barabbas, who for sedition and murder had been cast into prison; and the idea occurred to Pilate that if, instead either of asking them broadly and generally who it was that they wished him to release, or whether they would let him choose for them and release Jesus,—if he narrowed in this instance the choice, and presented to them the alternative of taking Barabbas or Jesus, they could scarcely fail to choose the latter. To give the greater effect to this proposition, Pilate ascended the movable rostrum or judgment-seat, which stood upon the tessalated pavement that ran before the vestibule of the Palace, and addressing himself

to the multitude, said to them, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

While waiting their answer, a message was brought to him, the messenger having been instructed to deliver it immediately, wherever he was, and however he might be engaged It came from his wife; was distinct and somewhat authoritative,—"Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate's wife was not a Jew, nor did she mix much with the common people of the land. That she should have heard so much of Jesus, have learned to think and speak of him as that just man, should have been so much concerned when she heard that her husband had been asked to try him, that she took this uncommon step of sending a warning to him on the judgment-seat,—may be taken as a proof how wide-spread and how deep the impression was that Christ had made.

The time occupied by the hearing and thinking about this message,—whose warning

knell rung in strange harmony with the alarm that was already pealing in Pilate's spirit,—gave to the Chief Priests and the rulers the opportunity they were so quick to seize, to prompt the crowd as to the answer they were to give to the proposal which Pilate had submitted. We do not know what kind of stimulants were employed upon this occasion; but we all do know what a flexible, impressible, excitable a thing a city mob is, when composed, as this one mainly was, of the lowest of the people; and we can at least easily conjecture what the firebrands were which the expert hands of the priesthood threw in among that mob, inflaming its passions to the highest pitch, and giving the burning mass into their hands, to be directed as they desired. Recovered a little from the disturbance which his wife's message cost him, Pilate turns again to the people, and says to them, "Which of the two, then, will ye that I release unto you?" They say, "Barabbas." Surprised and annoyed at the reply, almost willing to believe there has been some mis-

take, he puts it to them in another form: "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" using the epithet, in the belief that they, as well as he, will look upon its claimant more as an object of pity than of condemnation. But now they leave him in no doubt as to what their will and pleasure is: "Away with this man," they all cry out at once, "and release unto us Barabbas!" "What shall I then do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" This weak and almost pitiful asking of them what it was that he should do, ends, as all such yielding to popular prejudices, cringing to popular passions, ever does; it makes the multitude more confident, more imperious. The Governor has put himself into their hands, and they will make him do their will. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?" Let him be crucified, they say. Crucified! It is the first time the word has been named in Pilate's hearing, the first time they tell him articulately what it is they desire to have done with Jesus. Crucify him! —give up to that worst and most ignominious

of all deaths this meek and gentle man, who he is sure has done no wrong ; whom he sees well enough that the Chief Priests seek to get rid of from some religious antipathy that they have taken against him :—can the people mean it ? He had fancied, whatever the Chief Priests thought, that *they* had a different feeling towards him. " Why," in his surprise, he says to them, " what evil hath he done ?" But this now excited and uproarious crowd is far past the point of answering or arguing with the Governor. Its one and only cry is, " Let him be crucified !" Twice Pilate asks them to tell him what crime he had committed, that they should doom him to a felon's death. He gets but that cry repeated, with louder, angrier voice. Yet a third time,—clinging to the hope that he may still succeed in extricating Jesus from their grasp, without putting himself entirely wrong with them,—he puts the query,—" Why, what evil hath he done ?" and gathering up a little strength, as if he were determined to take his own way, and act upon the suggestion

that he had thrown out a few moments before, he adds, "I have found no cause of death in him. I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." The very mention of letting him go stirs the crowd to a tenfold frenzy, and now the voices of the Chief Priests themselves are heard swelling and intensifying the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Before a storm like this who can stand? He has done—so Pilate thinks—the most he can. If he go further, he will raise another city tumult which it will cost many lives to quell, and the quelling of which by force may expose him to the very same charges of tyranny and cruelty which, upon more than one occasion of the kind before, had actually been transmitted to Rome against him, and drawn down upon him the rebuke and displeasure of the Emperor. The yielding is but the sacrifice of a single life, which may be made without involving the Governor in any danger. But the resisting; who can tell in what that might land? Still, however, he is not at ease. He himself scarce knows the

reason why; but somehow he never saw the man whose blood he would like so ill to have resting upon him as the blood of Jesus. The private interview they had together in the Hall had raised some strange misgivings in Pilate's heart. What is it about this man that has given him so strong a hold upon Pilate, and makes him struggle so hard to get him released? Pilate himself could not have told; but even now, though he has at last resolved to give him up, he will not, cannot do it without trying in some way to throw off his shoulders the responsibility of his death. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.' Then answered all the people and said, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' And he delivered Jesus to their will."

Now, let us pause a moment here in the narrative to mark the inner workings of conscience and of humanity in the heart of Pilate.

It seemed an ingenious device to give the people their choice. It was resorted to from a desire on his part to rescue Jesus. It would gain, as it first seemed to him, a double object,—it would prevent the Jews from saying that he had screened a seditious man, and yet it would rescue an innocent one from death. But to what did it amount? It proceeded on the assumption that Christ was guilty; it asked that as one righteously condemned, he might by an act of grace be released. There lay one fatal flaw in the proposition. But, still worse, it put the matter out of Pilate's hands into those of the people. It was a virtual renunciation, on Pilate's part, of the rights and prerogatives of the judge. And by thus denuding himself of his own proper official position, Pilate put himself at the mercy of a fickle and infuriated populace, and gave them that hold and power over him which they so mercilessly employed.

This crying out—"Crucify, crucify him!" as contrasted with the hosannas that a few days before had greeted Christ's entrance into

Jerusalem, has been often quoted to prove how rapid the changes in popular sentiment sometimes are, how little a multitude can be trusted. But was it the same crowd which raised the hosannas of the one day, that uttered the "Crucify him, crucify him!" of the other? I rather think that had we been present upon both occasions, and intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, we should have seen that the two crowds were differently constituted; and that however true it may be that tides of public feeling often take suddenly opposite directions, this can scarcely be quoted as an instance exactly in point.

But very curious is it to mark the expedient to which Pilate had recourse, in that public washing of his hands. He delivers Jesus up to be crucified. Therein lay his guilt; he might, and should have refused to become a party to his crucifixion. Believing Jesus to be innocent, to give him up to death was to take a large share of the criminality upon himself. And yet he thinks that when

he gets the Jews to take it upon them that he has relieved himself, if not entirely, yet in great measure, of the responsibility. He regards himself as one coerced by others; and when these others are quite willing to take on themselves the entire weight of the deed, he imagines that this will go a great length in clearing him. And if ever, placed under strong compulsion from without, urged on to a certain course of conduct which in our conscience we disapprove, we yield, and in yielding take comfort to ourselves from others saying that they are quite ready to incur the whole responsibility of the affair, then let us remember that we are acting over again the part of Pilate; and that just as little as that outward washing of his hands did anything to clear him of the stain he was contracting, so little can we hope that the guilt contracted by our being a consenting and co-operating party in any deed of injustice or dishonor, may thus be mitigated or wiped away.

Pilate has given up Jesus to the will of the multitude; given him up to be crucified.

The judge's work is done; there remains only the work of the executioner. Over that it is no part of the Procurator's office to preside. Why, then, does Pilate not withdraw? We might have thought that, wearied with his conflict with the rabble, and oppressed with painful feelings as to its issue, he would have been only too glad to retire—but he cannot: a singular fascination still binds him to the spot,—perhaps the lingering hope that he may yet succeed in rescuing the victim from his bloodthirsty enemies. He hands Christ over to his soldiers, to have that scourging inflicted which was the ordinary precursor and preliminary to crucifixion. It might not be difficult from the narratives of eye-witnesses to give you some idea of what a military scourging was, what kind of instrument they used in it, what kind of wounds that instrument made, what terrible torture was inflicted, to what lengths that torture was often carried; but we would rather have a veil drawn over the purely physical sufferings of our Saviour, than have them pressed pro-

minently upon our eye. We recoil from the attempts so often made to excite a sympathetic horror by vivid details of our Lord's bodily sufferings. We feel as if it were degrading him to present him in that character, in which so many, equal nay superior in their claims upon our sympathy, might be put beside him.

But the scourging did not satisfy the rude and brutal soldiers who had got Christ into their hands. As Romans, these men knew little, cared little about any kingship that Christ might claim. With them it could not be, as with the Jews, a subject of religious hate or scorn. It was a topic alone of ribald mirth, of Gentile mockery. This Roman cohort takes the hint that Herod's men of war had given them; who had thrown a white robe over Jesus, clothing him with something like the garment that their own kings wore, that they might set at naught his vain pretensions to be a king. And now, when the scourging is over, these Roman soldiers will outdo their Jewish comrades; they will make

a more perfect pantomime of this poor Galilean's royalty. They take some old military cloak, of the same color with the robes of their emperors; they throw it over his bloody shoulders; they plait a crown of thorns, and put it on his head; they thrust a reed as a mock sceptre, into his right hand; and then, when they have got him robed, and crowned, and sceptred thus, they bow the knee, and hail him as a king. But they tire even of that mock homage; the demon spirit that is in them inspires the merriment with a savage cruelty; and so, as if ashamed even of that kind of homage they had rendered, they snatch impatiently the reed out of his hand, and smite with it the crown of thorns, and drive it down upon his pierced and bleeding brow, and spit upon him, and smite him with their hands.

All this is done in an inner court or guard-room, out of sight of the crowd that is still waiting without. Pilate sees it all; makes no attempt to mitigate the suffering or the mockery; is absorbed in wonder as he gazes

upon Jesus—such a picture of silent, gentle, meek, unmurmuring, uncomplaining patience! —standing there, and taking all that treatment as though no strange thing were happening, as if he had expected all, were prepared for all, found no difficulty in submitting to all. There is no weakness in that patience; but a strength, a power, a dignity. The sight moves Pilate's heart; it would move any heart, he thinks; may it not move even the hearts of those people without? may it not satisfy their thirst for vengeance to see the suffering Jesus reduced to such a pitiable plight as this? He will try at least what the sight can do in the way of stirring such sympathy. He goes forth, with Jesus following, and says to the multitude, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him;" then, turning and pointing to Jesus, as he stood wearing still the purple robe and the crown of thorns, bearing on his face and person the marks of all the sufferings and indignities of the guardhouse, Pilate says, "Behold the

man!"—behold and pity, behold and be satisfied,—behold, and suffer me, now that I have thus chastised him, to let him go! Alas! he knew not the intensity of such fanatic hatred as that which those High Priests and rulers cherished, and had, for the time, infused into the obedient crowd; how it quenches every impulse of kindliness in the human heart, and nerves the human hand for deeds of utmost cruelty. That sight to which he points, instead of moving any pity, only evokes fresh outbreaks of ferocious violence; with unabated breath, the same wild cry from every side salutes the ear of the Governor—"Crucify him, crucify him!" It not only disappoints, it provokes Pilate to be baffled thus again, and baffled by such a display of immovable and unappeasable malignity. "Take ye him and crucify him," he says, 'crucify him as best you can, but do not expect that I shall countenance the deed by any countersigning of your sentence in condemning the man, as if I thought he deserved to die—

take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.'

But the yielding Governor is not in this way to slip out of their hands; he, too, must be a party; and now, at last, they tell him what hitherto they had concealed—to show him that theirs was not such a groundless sentence as he imagined it to be—"We have a law," they said, "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." It is impossible to say what ideas that phrase, "the Son of God," excited in the mind of Pilate. He was familiar with all the legends of the heathen mythologies, which told of gods and demigods descending and living upon the earth. Like so many of the educated Romans of his day, he had thrown off all faith in their divinity, and yet somehow there still lingered within, a faith in something higher than humanity, some beings superior to our race. And what if this Jesus were one of these! never in all his intercourse with men, had he met one the least like this, one who looked so kinglike, so Godlike:

Kinglike, Godlike, even there as he now stands with a robe of faded purple and a crown of plaited thorns. Never in kingly garments, never beneath imperial crown, did he see a sceptred sovereign stand so serene, so dignified, so far above the men that stood round him. Whatever the ideas were which passed through Pilate's mind when he heard that Jesus had made himself the Son of God, they deepened that awe which from the first had been creeping in upon and taking possession of his spirit:—he was the more afraid. Once again, therefore, he takes Christ apart, and says to him, "*Whence art thou?*" 'In that first interview, you told me that your kingdom was not of this world, but whence art thou thyself? art thou of this earth, I mean like the rest of us, or art thou other than thou seemest,—comest thou indeed from heaven?' But Jesus gave him no answer. Of all the silences of our Lord that day, of which this in number was the fifth, it seems the most difficult to understand. Was it that Pilate, by the way in which he had then

put the question, "What is truth?" without pausing for a reply, had forfeited his right to an answer now? Was it that Pilate was wholly unprepared to receive the answer; that it would have been a casting of pearls before swine to have told him whence Jesus was? Was it that the information, had it been given, while ineffectual to stop his course, might have aggravated Pilate's guilt, and therefore, in mercy, was withheld? We cannot tell; but we can perceive that the very silence was in itself an answer; for, supposing Jesus had been a mere man, had come into this world even as we all come, would he, had he been sincere and upright, have hesitated to say whence he came? would he have allowed Pilate to remain in doubt? would he have suffered him, as his question evidently implied, to cherish the impression that he was something more than human? We can scarcely think he would. By his very silence, therefore, our Lord would throw Pilate back upon that incipient impression of his Divine origin, that it

might be confirmed and strengthened in his breast.

But here again, even as in the first interview, the haughtiness of the man comes in to quench all deeper thought. Annoyed by this silence, this calmness, this apparent indifference of Jesus, Pilate, in all the pride of office, says, "Speakest thou not to me; knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?"—a very idle attempt to work upon the mere selfish fears of Christ;—a question that brings a speedy answer, one in which rebuke and sympathy are singularly blended: 'Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." "That power of thine, to crucify me or release, which I do not dispute, which thou mayest exercise as thou pleasest, —do not think that it is a power original, underived, independent. Thou hast it, thou exercisest it but as Heaven permits; thou little knowest, indeed, what thou doest; it is as a mere holder of the power that thou art acting, acting at others'. bidding; therefore, that

Jewish Judge, who knowing far better at least than thou what it was he did, and who it was that he was giving up to death,'—"therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." There is something surely very impressive here; that, sunk as Jesus was beneath the weight of his own sufferings—sufferings so acute, that they well might have engrossed his thoughts and feelings,—he yet so calmly weighs in the judicial balance the comparative guilt of the actors in this sad scene, and excuses, as far as he is able, the actings of Pilate. It had something of its proper effect upon the Procurator. Instead of diminishing, it but increased the desire he already had to deliver him. He tried again; tried with still greater earnestness to effect his object. But again he failed, for now the last arrow in that quiver of his adversaries is shot at him—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Pilate knew that already he stood upon uncertain ground with the imperial au-

thorities; he knew that a fresh report of any thing like unfaithfulness to Cæsar would cost him his office. The risk of losing all that by occupying that office he had hoped to gain, he was not prepared to face, and so, yielding to this last pressure, he gives way, and delivers up Jesus to be crucified.

Now, let us look a moment at the faults and at the virtues of this man. The fact that it fell to his lot to be Governor of Judea at this time, and to consign the Saviour to the cross, inclines us to form exaggerated notions of his criminality. He was not, let us believe, a worse governor than many who preceded and who followed him in that office. We know from other sources that he frequently showed but little regard to human life—recklessly, indeed, shed human blood, when the shedding of it ministered to the objects of his ambition; but we have no reason to believe that he was a wantonly cruel man, or a particularly oppressive and tyrannical governor, as governors then went. His treatment of Christ was marked by any thing but

a contempt for justice and an absence of all human feeling. He showed a respect, a pity, a tenderness to Jesus Christ that, considering the little that he knew of him, excites our wonder. He struggled hard to evade the conclusion to which, with such unrelenting malignity, the Jewish leaders drove him. No other king, no other ruler with whom Christ or his Apostles had to do, acted half as conscientiously or half as tenderly as Pilate did. Herod, Felix, Agrippa,—compare their conduct in like circumstances with that of Pilate, and does he not in your estimate rise superior to them all? There is something in the compunctions, the relentings, the hesitations, the embarrassments of Pilate—those reiterated attempts of his to find a way of escape for himself and for Christ, that takes a strong hold upon our sympathy. We can not but pity, even while forced to condemn. Condemn, indeed, we must; for—

1. He was false to his own convictions; he was satisfied that Christ was innocent. Instead of acting at once and decidedly upon

that conviction, he dallied and he parleyed with it; sought to find some way by which he might get rid of that clear and imperative duty which it laid upon him; and by so doing he weakened and unsettled this conviction, and prepared for its being overborne.

2. He exhibited a sad degree of vacillation, inconsistency, indecision. Now he throws all blame upon the Priests: "I am innocent of his blood; see ye to it." Again, he takes the entire responsibility upon himself: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release?" Now he pronounces Jesus innocent, yet with the same breath proposes to have him punished as guilty: now he gives him up, and then he has recourse to every kind of expedient to rescue. Unstable as water, he does not, he cannot succeed.

3. He allowed others to dictate to him. Carelessly and inconsiderately he submits that to their judgment which he should have kept wholly within his own hold. He becomes thus as a wave of the sea, as a feather

in the air, which every breeze of heaven bloweth about as it listeth.

4. He allowed worldly interest to predominate over the sense of duty. Such was the plain and simple issue to which it came at last: Do the thing he knew was right—acquit the Saviour—do that, and run all risks; or do the thing he knew was wrong—do that, and escape all danger. Such was the alternative which was at last presented to him. Alas for Pilate! he chose the latter. But let each of us now ask himself, Had I been placed exactly in his position, with those lights only to guide me that he then had, should I have acted a better and bolder part? We may think and hope we should; but, in thinking so and hoping so, let us remember how often, when conscience and duty pointed in the one direction, and passion and self-interest pointed in the other, we have acted over and over again the very part of Pilate; hesitated and wavered, and argued and debated, and opened our ears to what others told us, or allowed ourselves to be borne away

by some strong tide that was running in the wrong direction. Nay more, how often have we, knowing as we do, or profess to do, who Christ was, whence he came, what he did for us, and whither he has gone,—how often have we given him up into unfriendly hands, to do with him what they would, without even the washing of our own, or the saying what we thought of him!

VII.

The Daughters of Jerusalem weeping.*

'THE mockeries of the Judgment Hall ended. Jesus is delivered into the hands of the officers, to be led away to the place of execution. It cannot now be settled with certainty or exactness, where this hill of Calvary was situated, nor how far it was from the residence of Pilate. It lay, we know, without the city gate, and a very ancient tradition points us to a low, bare, rounded elevation, outside and near the walls, which resembled somewhat in its form a human skull, and is supposed to have got from that resemblance the name it bore, of Golgotha. If that indeed was Calvary, the way was but a short one which the sad procession had to traverse

* Matt. xxvii. 31–34; Luke xxiii. 27–32.

First, however, ere beginning the mournful march, they strip our Lord of the purple robe they had thrown around his bleeding shoulders, and put his own raiment on him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his bleeding brow; he may have worn that to the last. It was part of the degradation of a public crucifixion that the doomed one should assist in carrying to the place of crucifixion the instrument of death. They might have spared this indignity to Jesus; they might have had some compassion as they saw with what a faint and weary step he walked. But compassion has no place in the hearts of these crucifiers, and so they lay the common burden on him. He sinks beneath the load. They must relieve him of it; but who will bear it instead? not one of themselves will stoop to the low office. A stranger, a man from Africa, Simon the Cyrenian, coming in from the country, meets them by the way. He would willingly have let the crowd go by that presses on to Calvary. But he is the very kind of man whom

they can turn into a tool to do this piece of drudgery. They lay hold of him and compel him to take up what Jesus was too weak to bear. Unwillingly he had to obey, to turn upon his steps, and follow Jesus, bearing after him the cross; a reluctant instrument of an overbearing soldiery and a haughty priesthood.

So far as we can learn, Simon had no previous knowledge of, had no special interest in Christ; instead of any great sympathy with him at the moment, he may rather have felt and resented it as a hardship, that such a service should have been exacted of him, and in such imperious fashion. But this compulsory companionship with Jesus in the bearing of the cross, carried him to Calvary; the sad tragedy enacted there forced him with so many other idle spectators to the spot. He stood there gazing upon the scene; he heard the words that came from the lips of Jesus; he felt the three hours' darkness come down, and wrap them all around. As the darkness cleared away, he saw the centurion standing

transfixed before the central cross, as Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. He heard that Roman officer, a stranger like himself, break forth with the exclamation: "Truly this was the Son of God!" What impression all that he saw and heard then made upon him we are not informed. From its being said, however, that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, whom Mark speaks of as being well-known disciples of the Lord, may we not indulge the belief that he who, when he was lifted up, was to draw all men unto him, that day drew this Cyrenian to himself; that the sight of those sufferings and of that death led Simon to inquire; that the inquiry conducted to discipleship; and that ever after he had to thank the Lord for the strange arrangement of his providence, which led him along that way into the city, at the very time when they were leading Jesus out to be crucified; that he met the crowd at the very moment that they were wanting some one to do that menial service

which in so rough a manner they pressed him to undertake?

Another incident marked the sorrowful procession to Calvary. Some women of the city, looking at him, as first he bends beneath the cross, and then, with aspect so meek and gentle, yet so sad and sorrow-stricken, moves onward to be crucified, have their feelings so deeply touched, that, unable to restrain their emotions, they openly bewail and lament his doom. These are not the women who had followed him from Galilee, and been in the habit of ministering to him. No more than Simon, were they numbered with his disciples. It was not with such grief as any of the Marys would have felt, had they been in the crowd, that these women were affected. They were not lamenting the loss of a teacher, a master, a friend they had learned to revere and love. They had joined the crowd as it gathered in the city thoroughfares through which it passed. The singular but common curiosity to look at men who are soon to die, and to see how they comport themselves in

front of death, has drawn them on. Soon, however, out of the three who are going forth to be crucified, their attention fixes upon Jesus. Something of him they may have known before; some part of his story they may have picked up by the way. They hear nothing friendly to him from any who are there around them. The spirit of the crowd they mingle with is one of rude and bitter hatred towards him. But woman's loving eye looks on him, woman's tender heart is melted at the sight; and, despite of all the restraint that might have been imposed on them by the tone and temper of that crowd, revelling with savage delight at the prospect of his crucifixion, and led on by some of the chief men of the city, they give free vent to that generous pity which swells their bosoms. They weep as they follow him. This weeping, the only circumstance, so far as we know, attending his passage out to Calvary, that attracted the special notice of our Lord, was the only one which induced him to break the patient silence he all along observed. But how does

he notice it? What does he say? He stops; he turns; he fixes his eye upon the weepers; and he says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

"Weep *not for me*." Does he reject that simple tribute of sympathy which they are rendering? Is he in any sense displeased at the tears they shed? Does he blame or forbid such tears? Not thus are we to interpret our Saviour's words. It may be quite true that it was not from any very deep, much less from any very pure or holy fountain, that those tears were flowing. It may have been nothing about him but the shame and the agony he had to suffer which drew them out. Still, they are tears of kindly pity, and such tears it never could have been his meaning or intention to condemn. He had freely shed such tears himself. They fell before the tomb of Lazarus, fell simply at sight of the weeping sisters, and of the Jews weeping along with them. Sympathy with human suffering, simply and purely as such, claims

the sanction of the tears which upon that occasion the Saviour shed; and that sanction covers the bewailing of these daughters of Jerusalem. Jesus is not displeased with, Jesus does not reject, the expression of their pity. So far from this, the tender sympathy that they show for him stirs a still deeper sympathy for them within his heart. This is the way that he acknowledges and thanks them for their tears. He thinks of them, he feels for them; he forgets his own impending griefs as he contemplates theirs. It had been but an hour or so before, that all the people who gathered round the bar of Pilate had cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" How little did they know what a doom it was they thus invoked upon themselves; how near and how terrible! But Jesus knew it; had thought of it perhaps when that wild cry arose; was thinking of it still. He had those scenes of famine, fire, and slaughter, when that ill-fated city of his crucifiers should see the execution of the sentence they had called down upon their own

head,—he had them all before his eye when he turned to those women by the way, and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."

Many of the very women who were lamenting Jesus by the way, may have perished in the siege of Jerusalem. That siege took place within less than forty years from the day of our Lord's crucifixion. Some of the younger mothers of that weeping band, would not have then seen out the threescore years and ten of human life. Their children would be all in middle life, constituting the generation upon which those woes were to descend which, three days before, while sitting quietly on the Mount of Olives with his disciples, looking across the valley upon the Holy City, Jesus had described by saying, that in those

days there should be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to that time, no, nor even should be again. When in the straitness of that terrible siege, before the terrors of the last assault, they crept into the underground passages and sewers of the city; when those who escaped out of the city hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains,—then were those prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, which our Saviour had obviously before him—some of whose words, indeed, he quotes—in part fulfilled. But just as, in that more lengthened discourse which our Lord had so recently delivered to his disciples, he mixed up in a way that it is impossible wholly to unravel, the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming, and the end of the world; so also, even within the compass of this short speech to the daughters of Jerusalem, it is easy enough to perceive that, beyond that nearer and more limited event, of which these women and their children were to be spectators, our Lord looks forward to the wider judgment, which at the

close of all was to enfold the whole world of the impenitent in its embrace.

And widening thus, as we are warranted to do, the scope and bearing of our Lord's words to these daughters of Jerusalem, let us ask ourselves, what message of instruction and of warning do they convey to us and to all men? First, I think we shall not be wrong if we interpret them as indicating to us the unprofitableness of that sympathy with human suffering which takes in nothing but the suffering it sees, and which expends itself alone in tears. The sympathy excited in the breasts of these women of Jerusalem was of this kind. It was the spectacle of human grief then before their eyes which had awakened it; there was a danger, at least, that those sensibilities, so deeply moved as long as the spectacle was before them, should collapse when that spectacle was withdrawn, and leave the heart quickened, it might be, in its susceptibility to the mere emotion of compassion, yet not otherwise improved. Weep not, then, the Saviour says to them, and says to us; weep not for

me; weep not, or weep not long, and weep not idly, over any sight or story of human suffering which calls not for your interference, which you have no power, not even by the sympathy that you expend upon it, to mitigate; or if, naturally and irresistibly, properly and becomingly, your tears flow forth, stop not at their shedding, do not indolently indulge the mere sentiment of pity; such indulgence may become but a piece of selfish gratification, narrowing the heart and paralyzing the hand for the dispositions and the doings of a true and genuine benevolence. Pity was never meant by the Creator to be separately or exclusively cultivated as an isolated emotion; it was meant to be the spring and the ally of a ready and generous aid held out to its object; to be the stimulus to, and the support of active effort. And such is the structure of that beautiful and nicely-balanced instrument, the human spirit, that if this established connexion between action and emotion be overlooked; if you foster the one without letting it lead on to the other, you

do a serious damage to the soul; you create in one region a monstrous overgrowth, in another a stunted deformity; and you dislocate and disconnect what the Creator intended should always be conjoined.

Take here the familiar instance of indulging to excess the reading of exciting fiction—tales in which the hero of the story passes through terrible trials, endurances, agonies of mind and heart. Our heart may pulsate all through with pity as we read; we may wet with tears the page that spreads out some heart-rending scene. Now, I am not going to say that it is in itself a wrong, or a sinful thing, or even a hurtful thing, to read such stories. On the contrary, I believe that it is not wrong; that it may be as beneficial as it is agreeable occasionally to do so. There are peculiar and there are good services to mind and heart that a well-executed fiction may render, which you cannot have rendered in any other way so well. But let such kind of reading usurp the place that should be given to other and better employment; let the taste

for it be gratified, without the consideration of anything beyond the pleasure that it yields; let the heart of the reader, with all its manifold affections, give itself up to be played upon continually by the hand of some great master in the art of quickening to the uttermost its sympathies with human passions and human griefs; will that heart, whose sensibilities may thus be stimulated until it yield to the gentlest touch of the great describer, will it be made kinder and better in its dispositions? will it even be made more tender to the sorrows of the real sufferers among whom it lives and moves? Is it not notoriously the reverse? You will find few more selfish, few less practically benevolent than those who expend all their stores of pity upon ideal woes. It is a deep well of pity, that which God has sunk in most human hearts. They are healing, refreshing, fructifying waters that it sends forth to cover the sorrows of the sorrowful; but if these waters be dammed up within the heart, they become first stagnant, and then the breeders of many noxious va-

pors, under which the true and simple charities wither away.

But let us now give to our Lord's words a more direct application to himself; to himself as the bearer of the cross. It cannot be thought that all sympathy with the Man of sorrows is forbidden. The recital, especially of his last sufferings, would not have been so full and so minute as it is in the sacred page, had it not been intended to take hold thereby of that sympathy. But the contemplation of Christ merely as a sufferer, if it terminate in nothing else than the excitement of sympathy, is a barren contemplation. Offer him nothing besides your compassion, he repudiates and rejects it. It is to dishonor the Redeemer to class him with those unfortunates, those unwilling victims of distress, whose unexampled sorrows knock hard at the heart for pity. Our pity he does not ask, he does not need. He spreads out before us his unparalleled griefs; he says, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" but he does so not to win from us

compassion, but to prove how he has loved us, loved us even to the death, suffering and dying for our redemption. His sorrows should set us thinking of our sins. Those sufferings which rested upon him when he took his place as our great Head and Representative, should bring up before our minds the sufferings which hang suspended over the heads of the finally impenitent and unbelieving.

"Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves: for if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He was himself the Green Tree; the fresh, the vigorous Vine,—its stock full of sap, its branches all nourished by union with that parent, life-giving Stem. Was he, then—in condition so unlike to that of fuel ready for the fire—cast into that great furnace of affliction? Had he to endure all its scorching, though to him unconsuming flames? What shall be done with him whose heart softens not at the sight of this divine and all-enduring love: whose heart closes up and hardens against God and Christ, till it becomes like

one of those dry and withered branches which men gather and cast into the fire? If God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all, who is there, among the rejecters and despisers of such a Saviour, that he will spare? Or if you would have the same argument set before you in yet another form, take it as presented by Peter: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I shall make no attempt either to expand or enforce the argument thus employed. Let me only remind you, that it was by these strange and solemn words of warning, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" that our Lord closed the public teaching of his ministry upon earth. Quiet as our skies now look, and secure and stable as all things around us seem, the days are coming, —he has told us among his latest sayings,—

when those who resist the approaches of his love shall see him in other guise, and when at the sight they shall cry to the mountains, "Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" How wise and good a thing were it for us all, in prospect of such days coming, to hide ourselves even now in the clefts of the smitten Rock; to hide ourselves in Jesus Christ as our loving Lord and Saviour; that, safe within that covert, the tribulation of those days may not reach us!

And now let me crave your attention, for a moment or two, to that singular tie of thought which so quickly linked together in the mind of the Saviour the sight of those sorrowful daughters of Jerusalem, with the fearful doom that was impending over their city. It is very remarkable how frequently and how vividly, in all its minute details, the coming destruction of Jerusalem was present to his thoughts during the last days and hours of

his earthly ministry. From the day that he raised Lazarus from the grave,—knowing that his enemies had taken counsel together to put him to death,—Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews. He retired to the country beyond Jordan, near to the wilderness. His hour at last approached, and he set his face to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified. He was in a part of the country that was under Herod's jurisdiction, and they told him that Herod sought to kill him. It cannot be, he said, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. The naming of the holy city; the thought of all the blood of all the prophets that was to cry out against her, and to seal her doom, filled his heart with sadness, and instantly he broke out into the exclamation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

On the Saturday before his death he arrives at Bethany. Next day he ascends the Mount of Olives. In the city they have heard of his coming. They go out to meet him, they hail him as they had never done before. Garments and palm-branches are spread upon the ground that he is to tread. Before him and around him the voices of the multitude are shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!" The ridge of the hill is reached, and Jerusalem bursts upon the view, lying across the valley spread out before the eye. He pauses; he gazes; his eyes they fill with tears. How strange it looks to that jubilant multitude! Ah! other sounds than their hosannas are falling on the Saviour's inner ear; other sights than that of their waving palm-branches are rising before his prophetic eye. He weeps; and, without naming it, looking at the doomed city, and pointing to it, he says: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which be-

long unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Christ's last day in the Temple and in Jerusalem was one of great excitement, of varied incident. Question after question about his authority to teach, about the payment of tribute-money, about the resurrection of the dead, is put to him. Attempt after attempt is made to entangle him in his talk. At last, from being the assailed, Jesus in his turn becomes the assailant, puts the question about Christ being David's Son and David's Lord, which none of them can answer, and then proceeds to launch his terrible denunciations at the Scribes and Pharisees. Woe is heaped upon woe, till all the righteous blood shed upon the earth seems coming on

the men of that generation, and concentratedly upon that city of Jerusalem. Again, as when he first turned his face towards the holy city, the thought melts his spirit into tenderness; the indignation dissolves and passes away, as, taking up the same words he had used before, he exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate,"—our Lord's last words within the Temple.

As they went out in the afternoon of that day, "Master," said one of his disciples to him, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! Jesus answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Later in the evening of that day—two days before his crucifixion—he sat

upon the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, looking once again at these great buildings, and in answer to an inquiry of his disciples, tired though he must have been with all the incidents of a most harassing day, he entered upon that lengthened prophecy in which he told how Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. And now again, in this last stage of his way to Calvary, the days that he had spoken of so particularly in that prophecy are once more before his eyes. How shall we explain all this? How was it that the city of Jerusalem had such a hold upon the heart of Jesus Christ? How was it that the joys and the sorrows, the provocations and the sympathies of his latest days, all alike, by some mysterious link of association, called up before his thoughts the terrible calamities which Jerusalem was to endure? Grant all that can be claimed for Jerusalem in the way of pre-eminence both as to character and destiny over all the cities of this earth; acknowledge the power that the close connexion between our Lord's own death and

its destruction must have exerted upon his mind; but beside all this, may we not believe that in the human heart of Jesus, as we know that there was room for special affection, individual attachment, so also was there room for the patriotic sentiment, that love of country by which every true man of woman born is characterized? Jesus was a Jew. Judea was the land of his birth. Jerusalem was the chief city of that land. Around its earlier and its later history there gathered all of joyful and of sorrowful interest that could touch a Jewish heart. And it touched the spirit of Jesus to contemplate its downfall. Are we wrong in thinking that with that which was divine, and that which was broadly human, there mingled a Jewish, a patriotic element in the grief which shed tears over its destruction? If love of country form part of a perfect man, shall we not believe that, purified from all imperfection,—its narrowness, its exclusiveness, its selfishness,—that affection had a place and found a home in the bosom of our Lord?

At such a season as this in the history of our own land we would fain believe so. A common loss, a common grief, a common sympathy, has knit all hearts together as they have but rarely been united. He can have been no ordinary Prince, whose death has caused so general, such universal grief. And she assuredly is no ordinary Queen, whose sorrow has been made their own by so many millions of human hearts. There is something cementing, purifying, ennobling, in a whole nation mourning as ours does now. Let us try to consecrate that mourning, and whilst we give to our beloved Sovereign the entire sympathy of our heart, only wishing that she fully knew* what a place she holds in the affections of her people, let us lift up our hearts in gratitude to Him who has bestowed on us in her such a priceless treasure, and let us lift up prayers to heaven, that she may have imparted to her that comfort and

* This Lecture was delivered on the Sunday succeeding the death of the Prince Consort, and before full expression of public sympathy had been given.

that strength, which, in such sorrow as hers, the highest and the humblest of earth equally need, and which are bestowed alike on all who ask, and trust, and hope, in and through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VIII.

The Penitent Thief.*

One of the first things done by the Roman soldiers to whom the execution of the sentence was committed, was to strip our Saviour and to nail him to the cross. We do not know whether that cruel operation of transfixing the hands and feet was performed while the cross yet lay upon the ground, or after it was erected. They offered him,—in kindness let us believe rather than in scorn, wine mingled with myrrh, an anodyne or soothing draught, fitted to dull or deaden the sense of pain, but he waved it away; he would do nothing that might lull the senses, but might at the same time impair the full, clear, mental consciousness. The clothing of

* Matt. xxvii. 35–37; John xix. 20–22; Luke xxiii. 23–43.

the criminal was in all such instances a legal perquisite of the executioners, and the soldiers proceeded to divide it among them. The other parts of his outer raiment they found it comparatively easy to divide; but when they came to his inner coat, finding it of somewhat unusual texture, woven from the top throughout—it may have been his mother's workmanship, or the gift of some of those kind women who had ministered to his wants and comforts—they found no way of disposing of it so easy as to cast lots among them whose it should be, fulfilling thus, but all unconsciously, that Scripture, which, apart from this manner of disposal of the clothing, we might not well have understood how it could be verified—"They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots."

Pilate's last act that morning, after he had given up Jesus to be crucified, was to have the ground of his sentence declared in a writing which he directed should be placed conspicuously upon the cross above his head. To secure that this writing should be seen and

read of all men, Pilate further ordered that it should be written in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, the three chief languages of the time. All the four evangelists record what this writing or superscription was, yet in each the words of which it was composed are differently reported. No two of them agree as to the precise terms of the title, though all of them are perfectly at one as to its meaning and intent. It does not in the least surprise us when four different narrators of some spoken, and it may be lengthened discourse, vary here and there in the exact words imputed to the speaker. It is somewhat different when it is a short written public document, like that placed over the Saviour's head on this occasion, the contents of which are given. Here we might naturally have expected that the very words—*literatim et verbatim*—would have been preserved. And if it be not so, in this case as well as in others equally if not more remarkable, such as that of the few words spoken by the voice from heaven at the time of the Saviour's bap-

tism, and those spoken by our Lord himself at the institution of his own Supper,—if it be the general sense, and not the exact words which the sacred writers present to us, is there no warning in this against the expectation of finding a minute and literal exactness everywhere in the gospel narrative? no warning against our treating that narrative as if such kind of exactness had been intended, and is to be found therein?

The sight of this title, posted up so prominently above the head of Jesus, annoyed the Jews. The Chief Priests were especially provoked; nor have we far to go to discover the reason of their provocation. Among the last things Pilate said to them, when he brought out Jesus, had been, "Behold your king!" And among the last things they said to Pilate, in the heat of their exasperation, and the urgency of their desire to have Jesus ordered off to instant crucifixion, was, "Away, away with him! crucify him! *we have no king but Cæsar*,"—this man is not only a false pretender, but he and all others

except Cæsar are traitors who make any such pretension. Thus, in that unguarded hour, did they absolutely renounce all desire or hope of having a king of their own. Pilate took them at their word, and put over Christ's head such a title as implied that any one claiming to be king of the Jews might, on that ground alone, whatever his rights and claims—on the ground simply of the allegiance which the Jews owed, and which the Chief Priests had avowed, to the Roman Emperor—be justly condemned to death. When they looked at that legal declaration of his crime placed above Christ's head, and thought of all that it implied, the Chief Priests hurried back to Pilate, and asked him to make a modification of it, which should leave it open that there might be another king of the Jews besides Cæsar. "Write not," they said to Pilate, "The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." Let it be made patent, that it was as an illegitimate claimant that he was put to death. In ill humor with himself, in worse

humor with them, Pilate is in no mood to listen to their proposal. He will hold them tightly to their own denial and disavowal of any king but Cæsar; and so, with a somewhat sharp and surly decisiveness, he dismisses them by saying, "What I have written, I have written."

Meanwhile, the soldiers have completed their cruel work. It was when in their hands, or soon after, that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such rough handling as that to which our Lord had been subjected, such acute bodily suffering as it had inflicted, have a strong tendency to irritate, and to render the sufferer indifferent to everything beyond his own injuries and pains. But how far above this does Jesus rise? No murmuring; no threatening; no accusation; no lament; no cry for help; no invoking of vengeance; no care for, or thought of self; no obtruding of his own forgiveness. It is not, *I forgive* you; but, "Father, forgive them." No sidelong glance even at his own wrongs and sufferings, in

stating for what the forgiveness is solicited. "They know not what they do;" in this simple and sublime petition, not the slightest, most shadowy trace of self-consideration. It is from a heart occupied with thought for others, and not with its own woes; it is out of the depths of an infinite love and pity, which no waters can quench, that there comes forth the purest and highest petition for mercy that ever ascended to the Father of mercies in the heavens. It is from the lips of a Brother-Man that this petition comes, yet from One who can speak to God as to his own Father. It is from Jesus on the cross it comes; from him who submits to all the shame and agony of crucifixion, that as the Lamb that once was slain for us, he might earn, as it were, the right thus to pray, and furnish himself with a plea in praying, such as none but he possesseth and can employ. As a Prophet, he had spoken to the daughters of Jerusalem by the way; as the great High Priest, he intercedes for his crucifiers from the cross.

Nor are we to confine that intercession to those for whom in the first instance it was exerted. Wide over the whole range of sinful humanity does that prayer of our Redeemer extend. For every sinner of our race, if it be true of him that he knew not what he did, that Prayer of Jesus goes up to the throne of mercy. It was in comparative ignorance that those soldiers and those Jews crucified Jesus. Had they known what they did, we have an apostle's testimony for believing they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But their ignorance did not take away their guilt. Had it done so, there had been no need of an intercessor in their behalf. It was with wicked hands they did that deed. Nor did their ignorance in any way entitle them to forgiveness; then might it have been left to the Father to deal with them without any intercession of the Son. But their ignorance brought them and their doings within the pale of that Divine mercy for which the prayer of the great Mediator was presented. How far we are entitled to carry this idea, I

shall not presume to say. Was it because of that element—the element of an imperfect knowledge of what was done—that for the transgression of man a Saviour and a sacrifice were provided,—not provided for the sin of fallen angels, of whom it could not, in the same sense, be said that they knew not what they did? Is it to that degree in which a partial ignorance of what we do, prevails—that ignorance not being of itself entirely our own fault—that our transgression comes within the scope and power of the intercession of the Redeemer? To questions such as these we venture no reply. Only let us remember that sins rise in magnitude as they are committed against light, and that the clearer and fuller that light is, and the greater and more determined and obstinate our resistance to it, the nearer we approach to that condition which the apostle had in his eye when he wrote these words of warning: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have

tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; for if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

Their cruel work completed, the soldiers sit down before the cross to watch. Behind them the people stand beholding. There is a momentary stillness. It is broken by some passers by—for the cross was raised near some public thoroughfare—who, stopping for a moment as they pass, look up, and wag their heads at Jesus, saying contemptuously to him, "Ah! thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself! If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." That ribald speech strikes the key-note for other like fiendish taunts and gibes. The Chief Priests, the scribes, the elders—

their dignity forgotten—hasten to join the mockery; to deaden perhaps some unwelcome voices rising within their hearts. They do not act, however, like the honest common people, who in their passing by look up at or speak directly to Jesus,—they do not, they dare not. They stand repeating, as Mark tells us, *among themselves;* saying *of* him, not *to* him, "He saved others, himself he cannot save; let him save himself if he be the Christ, the chosen of God. If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God (strange that they should thus blasphemously use the very words of the twenty-second Psalm), let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." The Roman soldiers get excited by the talk they hear going on around. They rise, and they offer him some vinegar to drink, repeating one of the current taunts, till at last one of the malefactors, hanging on the cross beside him, does the same.

Strange, certainly, that among those who

rail at Jesus at such a time, one of those crucified along with him should be numbered. Those brought out to share together the shame and agony of a public execution, have generally looked on each other with a kindly and indulgent eye. Outcasts from the world's sympathy, they have drawn largely upon the sympathy of one another. Since they were to die thus together, they have desired to die at peace. Many an old, deep grudge has been buried at the gallows-foot. But here, where there is nothing to be mutually forgotten, nothing to be forgiven, nothing whatever to check the operation of that common law by which community in suffering begets sympathy; here, instead of sympathy, there is scorn; instead of pity, reproach. What called forth such feelings, at such a time, and from such a quarter? In part it may have been due to the circumstance that it was upon Jesus that the main burden of the public reproach was flung. Bad men like to join with others in blaming those who either are, or are supposed to be, worse men than themselves.

And so it may have brought something like relief, may even have ministered something like gratification to this man to find that when brought out for execution, the tide of public indignation directed itself so exclusively against Jesus—by making so much more of whose criminality, he thinks to make so much less of his own. Or is it the spirit of the religious scoffer that vents here its expiring breath? All he sees, and all he hears—those pouting lips, those wagging heads, those upbraiding speeches—tell him what it was in Jesus that had kindled such enmity against him, and too thoroughly does he go in with that spirit which is rife around the cross, not to join in the expression of it, and so whilst others are railing at Jesus, he too will rail. It is difficult to give any more satisfactory explanation of his conduct, difficult in any case like this to fathom the depths even of a single human spirit; but explain it as you may, it was one drop added to the cup of bitterness which our Lord that day took into his hands, and drunk to the very dregs, that not only

were his enemies permitted to do with him what they would, but the very criminal who is crucified by his side, deems himself entitled to cast such reproachful sayings in his teeth.

But he is not suffered to rail at Jesus unrebuked, and the rebuke comes most appropriately from his brother malefactor, who turning upon him says, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" "Dost not thou fear God?"—he does not need to say, Dost thou not fear man? for man has already done all that man can do. But, Dost not thou fear God? He knows then that there is a God to fear, a God before whose bar he and his brother sufferer are soon to appear; a God to whom they shall have to give account, not only for every evil action that in their past lives they have done, but for every idle word that in dying they shall speak. He knows it now, he feels it now,—had he known and felt it sooner, it might have saved him from hanging on that cross,—that over and above the condemnation of man which he had so lightly thought of,

and so fearlessly had braved, there is another and weightier condemnation, even that of the great God, into whose hands, as a God of judgment, it is a fearful thing for the impenitent to fall.

"And we indeed justly." No questioning of the proof, no quarrelling with the law, no reproaching of the judge. He neither thinks that his crime was less heinous than the law made it, nor his punishment greater than the crime deserved. Nor do you hear from this man's lips what you so often hear from men placed in like circumstances, the complaint that he had been taken, and he must die, whilst so many others, greater criminals than himself, are suffered to go at large unpunished. At once and unreservedly he acknowledges the justice of the sentence, and in so doing, shows a spirit penetrated with a sense of guilt. And not only is he thoroughly convinced of his own guilt, he is as thoroughly convinced of Christ's innocence. "We indeed justly"—for we receive the due reward of our deeds—"but this man hath done nothing

amiss." Little as he may have seen or known before of Jesus, what he had witnessed had entirely convinced him that His was a case of unmerited and unprovoked persecution; that he was an innocent man whom these Jews, to gratify their own spleen, to avenge themselves in their own ignoble quarrel with him, were hounding to the death.

But he goes much further than to give expression merely to his conviction of Christ's innocence,—and it is here we touch upon the spiritual marvels of this extraordinary incident. Turning from speaking to his brother malefactor, fixing his eye upon, and addressing himself to Jesus, as he hangs upon the neighboring cross, he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." How came he, at such a time, and in such circumstances, to call Jesus Lord? how came he to believe in the coming of his kingdom? It is going the utmost length to which supposition can be carried, to imagine that he had never met with Jesus till he had met him that morning to be led out in company with

him to Calvary. He saw the daughters of Jerusalem weeping by the way; he heard those words of Jesus which told of the speaker's having power to withdraw the veil which hides the future; he had seen and read the title nailed above the Saviour's head, proclaiming him to be the King of the Jews; from the lips of the passers-by, of the Chief Priests, the elders, the soldiers, he had gathered that this Jesus, now dying by his side, had saved others from that very death he is himself about to die, had professed a supreme trust in God, had claimed to be the Christ, the Chosen, the Son of God, and he had seen and heard enough to satisfy him that all which Jesus had claimed to be he truly was. Such were some of the materials put by Divine Providence into this man's hands whereon to build his faith; such the broken fragments of the truth loosely scattered in his way. He takes them up, collects, combines; the Enlightening Spirit shines upon the evidence thus afforded, shines in upon his quickened soul; and there brightly dawns upon his

spirit the sublime belief that in that strange sufferer by his side he sees the long-promised Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, the Son and equal of the Father, who now, at the very time that his mind has opened to a sense of his great iniquity, and he stands trembling on the brink of eternity, reveals himself as so near at hand, so easy of access. His faith, thus quickly formed, goes forth into instant exercise, and, turning to Jesus, he breathes into his convenient ear the simple but ardent prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The hostile multitude around are looking forward to Christ's approaching death, as to that decisive event which shall at once, and for ever, scatter to the winds all the idle rumors that have been rife about him; all his vain pretensions to the Messiahship. The faith of Christ's own immediate followers is ready to give way before that same event; they bury it in his grave, and have only to say of him afterwards, "We hoped that it had been he that should have redeemed

Israel." Yet here amid the triumph of enemies, and the failure of the faith of friends, is one who, conquering all the difficulties that sense opposes to its recognition, discerns, even through the dark envelope which covers it, the hidden glory of the Redeemer, and openly hails him as his Lord and King. Marvellous, indeed, the faith in our Lord's divinity which sprung up so suddenly in such an unlikely region; which shone out so brightly in the very midnight of the world's unbelief. Are we wrong in saying that, at the particular moment when that testimony to Christ's divinity was borne, there was not another full believer in that divinity but this dying thief? If so, was it not a fitting thing, that he who was never to be left without a witness, now when there was but one witness left, should have had this solitary testimony given to his divinity at the very time when it was passing into almost total eclipse; so nearly wholly shrouded from mortal vision? There were many to call him Lord when he rose triumphant from the tomb; there is but

one to call him Lord as he hangs dying on the cross.

But let us look upon the prayer of the dying thief not only as a public testimony to the kingly character and prerogative of Jesus, but as the prayer of individual, appropriating faith; the earnest, hopeful, trustful application of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. His ideas of Christ's character and office may have been obscure; the nature of that kingdom into possession of which he was about to enter, he may have but imperfectly understood. He knew it, however, to be a spiritual kingdom; he felt that individually he had forfeited his right of admission to its privileges and its joys; he believed that it lay with Jesus to admit him into that kingdom. Not with a spirit void of apprehension, may he have made his last appeal. It may have seemed to him a very doubtful thing, whether, when relieved from the sharp pains of crucifixion, the suffering over, and the throne of the kingdom reached, Jesus would think of him amid the splendors and the joys

of his new kingly state. Doubts of a kindred character have often haunted the hearts of the penitent, the hearts of the best and the holiest; but there were two things of which he had no doubt, that Jesus could save him if he would, and if he did not, he should perish. And it is out of these two simple elements that genuine faith is always formed, a deep, pervading, subduing consciousness of our unworthiness, a simple and entire trust in Christ.

It has been often and well said, that whilst this one instance of faith in Jesus formed at the eleventh hour is recorded in the New Testament, in order that none, even to the last moment of their being, should despair,—there is but this one instance, that none may presume upon a death-bed repentance. And even this instance teaches most impressively that the faith which justifies always sanctifies; that the faith which brings forgiveness and opens the gates of Paradise to the dying sinner carries with it a renovating power; that the faith which conveys the title, works

at the same time the meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Let a man die that hour in which he truly and cordially believes, that hour his passage into the heavenly kingdom is made secure; but let a window be opened that hour into his soul, let us see into all the secrets thereof, and we shall discover that morally and spiritually there has been a change in inward character corresponding to the change in legal standing or relationship with God. It was so with this dying thief. True, we have but a short period of his life before us, and in that period only two short sayings to go upon; happily, however, sayings of such a kind, and spoken in such circumstances, as to preclude all doubt of their entire honesty and truthfulness; and what do they reveal of the condition of that man's mind and heart? What tenderness of conscience is here; what deep reverence for God; what devout submission to the divine will; what entire relinquishment of all personal grounds of confidence before God; what a vivid realizing of the world of spirits; what

a humble trust in Jesus; what a zeal for the Saviour's honor; what an indignation at the unworthy treatment he was receiving? May we not take that catalogue of the fruits of genuine repentance which an apostle has drawn up for us, and applying it here, say of this man's repentance,—Behold what carefulness it wrought in him; yea, what clearing of himself; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things he approved himself to be a changed man, in the desires and dispositions and purposes of his heart. The belief has been expressed, that in all the earth there was not at that particular moment such a believer in the Lord's divinity as he; would it be going too far to couple with that belief this other, that in all the earth, and at that moment, there was not another man inwardly riper and readier for entrance into Paradise?

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Loud and angry voices have for hours been ringing in the vexed ear

of Jesus,—voices whose blasphemy and inhumanity wounded him far more than the mere personal antipathy they breathed. Amid these harsh and grating sounds, how new, how welcome, how grateful, this soft and gentle utterance of desire, and trust, and love! It dropped like a cordial upon the fainting spirit of our Lord, the only balm that earth came forth to lay upon his wounded spirit. Let us, too, be grateful for that one soothing word addressed to the dying Jesus, and wherever the gospel is declared let these words which that man spake be repeated in memorial of him.

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." He will not ask to be remembered *now;* he will not break in upon this season of his Lord's bitter anguish. He only asks that, when the sharp pains of his passion shall be over, the passage made, and the throne of the kingdom won, Jesus will, in his great mercy, *then* think of him. Jesus will let him know that he does not need to wait so long; he will let him know that the

Son of man hath power, even on earth, to forgive sin; that the hour never cometh when his ear is so heavy that it can not hear, his hand so shortened that it can not save; and the prayer has scarce been offered when the answer comes, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The lips may have trembled that spake these words; soft and low may have been the tone in which they were uttered; but they were words of power,—words which only one Being who ever wore human form, could have spoken. His divinity is acknowledged: the moment it is so, it breaks forth into bright and beautiful manifestation. The hidden glory bursts through the dark cloud that veiled it, and, in all his omnipotence to save, Jesus stands revealed. What a rebuke to his crucifiers! They may strip his mortal body of its outward raiment, which these soldiers may divide among them as they please; his human soul they may strip of its outer garment of the flesh, and send it forth unclothed into the world of spirits. But his kingly right to

dispense the royal gift of pardon, his power to save, can they strip him of that? Nay, little as they know it, they are helping to clothe him with that power, at the very time when they think they are laying all his kingly pretensions in the dust. He will not do what they had so often in derision asked him that day to do;—he will not come down from the cross;—he will not give that proof of his divinity; he will not put forth his almighty power by exerting it upon the world of matter. But on this very cross he will give a higher proof of his divinity: he will exert that power, not over the world of matter, but over the world of spirits, by stretching forth his hand and delivering a soul from death, and carrying it with him that day into paradise.

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone; he would have others rise along with him. And so, even as he dies, the earthquake does its allotted work, work so strange for an earthquake to do,—it

opens not a new grave for the living, it opens the old graves of the dead; and as the third morning dawns, from the opened graves the bodies of the saints arise with the rising body of the Lord,—types and pledges of the general resurrection of the dead, verifying, by their appearance in the Holy City, the words of ancient prophecy: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." And as Jesus would not rise from the sepulchre alone, so neither will he enter Paradise alone. He will carry one companion spirit with him to the place of the blessed; thus early giving proof of his having died upon that cross that others through his death might live, and live for ever. See, then, in the ransomed spirit borne that day to Paradise, the primal trophy of the power of the uplifted cross of Jesus! What saved this penitent thief? No water of baptism was ever sprinkled upon him; at no table of communion did he ever sit; of the

virtue said to lie in sacramental rites he knew nothing. It was a simple believing look of a dying sinner upon a dying Saviour that did it. And that sight has lost nothing of its power. Too many, alas! have passed, are still passing by that spectacle of Jesus upon the cross; going, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and not suffering it to make its due impression on their hearts; but thousands upon thousands of the human race—we bless God for this—have gazed upon it with a look kindred to that of the dying thief, and have felt it exert upon them a kindred power. Around it, once more, let me ask you all to gather. Many here, I trust, as they look at it, can say, with adoring gratitude, He loved *me;* he gave himself for me; he was wounded for my transgression, he was bruised for mine iniquity; he is all my salvation, he is all my desire. Some may not be able to go so far; yet there is one step that all of us, who are in any degree alive to our obligations to redeeming love, can take—one prayer that we all may offer; and surely, if that petition got so

ready audience when addressed to Jesus in the midst of his dying agonies, with certain hope of not less favorable audience may we take it up, and shaping it to meet our case, may say, Now that thou hast gone into thy kingdom, O Lord, remember me.

Yet once more let the words of our Lord be repeated, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But where this Paradise; what this Paradise? We can say, in answer to these questions, that with this heavenly Paradise into which the redeemed at death do enter, the ancient, the earthly Paradise is not fit to be compared. In the one, the direct intercourse with God was but occasional; in the other it shall be constant. In the one, the Deity was known only as he revealed himself in the works of creation and in the ways of his providence; in the other, it will be as the God of our redemption, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, that he will be recognised, adored, obeyed — all the higher moral attributes of his nature shining forth in harmonious and illustrious

display. Into the earthly Paradise the Tempter entered; from the heavenly he will be shut out. From the earthly Paradise sad exiles once were driven; from the heavenly we shall go no more out for ever. Still, however, after all such imperfect and unsatisfying comparisons, the questions return upon us, Where, and what is this Paradise of the redeemed? Our simplest and our best answers to those questions perhaps are these—Where is Paradise? wherever Jesus is. What is Paradise? to be for ever with, and to be fully like, our Lord. We know—for God has told us so, of that Paradise of the redeemed—that it is a land of perfect light; the day has dawned there; the shadows have for ever fled away. It is a land of perfect blessedness; no tears fall there; no sighs rise there; up to the measure of its capacity, each spirit filled with a pure never-ending joy. It is a land of perfect holiness; nothing that defileth shall enter there, neither whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie. But what gives to that land its light, its joy, its holi

ness in the sight of the redeemed? it is the presence of Jesus. If there be no night there, it is because the Lamb is the light of that place; if there be no tears there, it is because from every eye his hand has wiped off every tear. The holiness that reigneth there is a holiness caught from the seeing him as he is. And trace the tide of joy that circulates through the hosts of the blessed to its fountain-head, you will find it within that throne on which the Lamb that once was slain is sitting. To be with Jesus, to be like Jesus, to love and serve him purely, deeply, unfailingly, unfalteringly—that is the Christian's heaven.

I love, says one, to think of heaven; and as I repeat the words, they will find an echo in each Christian heart:—

"I love to think of heaven; its cloudless light,
Its tearless joys, its recognitions, and its fellowships
Of love and joy unending; but when my mind anticipates
The sight of God incarnate, wearing on his hands
And feet and side marks of the wounds
Which he for me on Calvary endured,
All heaven beside is swallowed up in this;
And he who was my hope of heaven below
Becomes the glory of my heaven above."

Yet once again let the memorable words of our Lord be repeated, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." What a day to that dying man! How strange the contrast between its opening and its close, its morning and its night! Its morning saw him a culprit condemned before the bar of earthly judgment; before evening shadowed the Hill of Zion, he stood accepted at the bar of heaven. The morning saw him led out through an earthly city's gates in company with one who was hooted at by the crowd that gathered round him; before night fell upon Jerusalem, the gates of another city, even the heavenly, were lifted up, and he went up through them in company with one around whom all the hosts of heaven were bowing down, as he passed on to take his place beside the Father on his everlasting throne. Humblest believer in the Saviour, a like marvellous contrast is in store for you. This hour, it may be, weak and burdened, tossing on the bed of agony, in that darkened chamber of stifled sobs and drooping tears; the next hour, up and away

in the Paradise of God, mingling with the spirits of the just made perfect, renewing death-broken friendships, gazing on the unveiled glories of the Lamb. Be thou then but faithful unto death; struggle on for a few more of those numbered days, or months, or years, and on that day of your departure hence, in his name I have to say it to you, Verily, thou too shalt be with him in Paradise.

IX.

The Mother of our Lord.*

The last sight we got of the disciple whom Jesus loved was when he and Peter entered together into the Hall of the High Priest. Silent and in the shade, he escaped the scrutiny that his rash companion drew upon himself. Of the sad scene that ensued, John was the sorrowful witness. He saw the Lord turn and look upon Peter; he saw Peter turn and leave the hall. It is not likely that he followed him. A stronger attraction kept him where he was. He waited to see what the issue of these strange proceedings should be; waited till he heard the judgment of the Sanhedrim given; waited till he saw the weak and sorely-badgered Governor at last give

* 1 John xix 25–27.

way; waited perhaps till the preparations for the crucifixion had commenced. Then may he have gone in haste into the city; gone to seek out those who, he knew, would be most interested to hear; especially to seek out and to comfort her upon whose wounded heart the burden of these terrible tidings would fall most heavily. Most likely it was from the lips of the beloved disciple that Mary first heard that morning of the fate which awaited Jesus. But where and when did she first see him? Not in the palace of the High Priest; not in the Judgment Hall of Pilate. Although she had got the tidings soon enough to be there, these were not places for such a visitant. Nor was she one of those daughters of Jerusalem that lamented and bewailed him by the way. The first sight she gets of him is when, mocked by the soldiers, derided by the passers-by, insulted by the Chief Priests, he hangs upon the cross. She has her own sister Mary with her, and that other faithful Mary of Magdala, with John beside them, making up that little group, who, with

feelings so different from those of all the others, gaze upon the scene.

The prayer for his crucifiers has been offered. The penitent thief has heard the declaration that opens to him that day the gates of Paradise, when the eye of the Crucified, wandering over the motley crowd, fixes upon that little group standing, quietly but sadly, near enough to be spoken to. John is addressing some word, or doing some act of kindness to Mary. They are at least so close to one another, that though Jesus names neither, neither can mistake of whom and to whom he speaks, as, bending a tender look upon them, he says, "Woman, behold thy son!" "Son, behold thy mother!" John acts at once on the direction given, and withdraws Mary from the spot, and takes her to his own home in Jerusalem. Amid the dark and tumultuous, solemn and awful incidents of the crucifixion, this incident has so much of peaceful repose that we feel tempted to dwell upon it. At once, and very naturally, it suggests to us a review of the previous re-

lationship and intercourse between Mary and her mysterious Son. We cannot, indeed, rightly appreciate our Lord's notice of her from the cross without taking it in connexion with that relationship and intercourse.

The angelic annunciation, the salutation of Elizabeth, the visits of the Bethlehem shepherds and the Eastern Magi, had all prepared Mary to see, in her first-born Son, One greater than the children of men. All those sayings—about his greatness and glory, his being called the Son of the Highest, his sitting upon the throne of David his father, his reigning over the house of Jacob for ever—she kept and pondered in her heart, wondering exceedingly what manner of man that child of hers should be, in whom those sayings should be fulfilled. As she listened to all those prophecies of his future greatness, by which his birth was foretold and celebrated, what bright and glowing anticipations must have filled Mary's heart! One discordant word alone at this time fell upon her ear, one saying differing from all the rest, the meaning of which

she could not understand. "This child," said the aged Simeon, as he took up the babe into his arms at his presentation within the Temple,—"this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against. Yea, added the aged prophet, as he looked sadly and sympathizingly at Mary, "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Was it to temper her new-born joy; was it to teach her to mingle some apprehension with her hopes; was it to prepare and fortify her for the actual future that lay before her—so different from the imagined one—that these words were spoken? Beyond exciting a fresh wonder and perplexity, they could, however, have had but little effect on Mary at the time. She did not, she could not understand them then; therefore, with those bright and joyous anticipations still within her heart, she retired to Nazareth. The child grew, the Evangelist tells us, waxed strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom, the grace of God was upon him; but beyond that gentleness which nothing

could ruffle, that meekness which nothing could provoke, that wisdom which was daily deepening and widening, giving ever new and more wonderful, yet ever natural and child-like exhibitions of itself, that dutiful submission to his reputed parents, that love to all around him upon earth, that deeper love to his Father in heaven,—beyond that rare and unexampled assemblage of all the virtues and graces by which a human childhood could be adorned, there was nothing outwardly to distinguish him from any child of his own age, nothing outwardly to mark him out as the heir of such a glorious destiny.

Twelve years of that childhood pass. Jesus has been to Mary so like what any other son might have been to his mother, that, unconscious of any difference, she assumes and exercises over him all ordinary maternal rights. But now, again, just as it was with that speech of Simeon among the other prophecies that heralded the Redeemer's birth, so is it with an act and speech of Christ himself among the quiet incidents

out of which, for thirty years, his life at Nazareth was made up. When twelve years old, they take Jesus up to Jerusalem, the days of the festival are fulfilled, the village company to which Jesus and his family were attached, leave the Holy City on their return. Joseph and Mary never for a moment doubt that, acting with his accustomed wisdom and dutifulness, their son will be with the other youths from Nazareth and its neighborhood, along with whom he had made the journey up to the Holy City. Not till the usual resting-place for the night is reached do they miss him. Something must have happened to hinder him from joining the company at Jerusalem. Full of anxiety, Joseph and Mary return into the city. Three days are spent in the sorrowful search. At last they find him, sitting quietly among the doctors, as if the Temple were his home. Imagine Mary's feelings at this sight. No accident, then, had happened to him; no restraint had been laid upon him. It had been voluntarily and deliberately that her son had remained thus

behind for four days after her departure. Never before had Jesus acted in such a way, never said or done anything fitted to give her pain. Never before had she occasion to reproach or rebuke him, but now, in her surprise and grief, she cannot help speaking to him as she had never done before. "Son," said she, when at last she found him,—"Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Now, mark the Son's reply when spoken to as if he had been forgetful of the duty that a child owes to his parents. Mary had called him Son; he does not call her Mother; he never does,—never in any conversation related in the Gospels. Mary had spoken of Joseph as his father; he nowise recognizes that relationship. The full consciousness of another, higher Sonship than that to Mary has entered his youthful heart; and, under the inspiration of this consciousness, his only reply to the maternal appeal is, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's busi-

ness?"—a very strange and altogether unexpected answer; one which, we are distinctly told, neither Mary nor Joseph understood. It offered no explanation or excuse for his conduct. It denied all need for any such explanation or excuse. In the matter of his heavenly Father's business, it repudiated their interference. Mary had never heard her own or Joseph's authority over him questioned by Jesus. Had this visit to Jerusalem weakened in his heart the sense of subjection to them? Was he going to throw it off? Will he refuse to accompany them? Must he still continue to be thus engaged about his Father's business? No! Having said thus much, to teach them that he knew how special his earthly relationship to them was, he rose, he left the temple, and returning with them to Nazareth, was subject to them as before, yet not without having deposited another seed of wonder in Mary's heart,—wonder as to what that other Father's business was, with her son's mode of doing which she, as his mother, must not interfere.

Jesus is, as before, Mary's dutiful and submissive Son. Joseph dies, and he, who had been sharer of his reputed father's earthly labors, becomes perhaps the chief support and solace of his mother in her widowhood. Eighteen years go past. Jesus leaves his home at Nazareth, alone, for none of his own family believe in him. He presents himself on the banks of the Jordan, and asks baptism at the hands of John. The sign from heaven is given; the voice from heaven is heard; the Baptist points to him as the Lamb of God. Philip hails him as the Messiah promised to the fathers. Nathanael recognizes him as the Son of God, the King of Israel. All this is told to Mary. A few weeks later her Son returns, and finds her at the marriage-feast at Cana; returns now with public vouchers of his Messiahship, and with five followers, who acknowledge him as their Master. Once more, as at his birth, the hopes of Mary's heart rise high. It is at the house of a friend —of a near relative, it has been conjectured— that this marriage-feast is held. The guests,

swelled by Christ's disciples, are more numerous than had been anticipated. The wine provided fails. If her Son be indeed that great Prophet who is to appear, might he not take this public opportunity of partially, at least, revealing himself? Might he not interfere to shield this family from discredit? Might he not, with the wine that still remained, do something like to what Elijah had done with the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal? Filled with such hopes, she calls his attention to the deficiency, trusting that he may possibly, in his new character and office, remove it. "She saith to him, They have no wine. Jesus saith to her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? (or, what hast thou to do with me?) mine hour is not yet come." Soften it as we may, relieve it from all that may seem disrespectful, there was discouragement and reproof in this reply. Presuming upon her motherly relationship, on the privileges that her thirty years of maternal control have given her, Mary ventures to suggest, and she does it in the most delicate manner, what

nis course of action might be, now that he enters upon the public walk of the great Prophet. Upon all such interference on her part, an instant, gentle, but firm check must be imposed. Mary must be taught the limits of that influence and authority which her earthly relationship to him had hitherto permitted her to exercise. She must be taught that in the new and higher path upon which he was now about to enter, that motherly relationship gave her no place nor right to direct or to control.

Mary felt and acted upon the reproof. She never afterwards, at least that we know of, in any way obtruded herself. In the history of our Lord's three years' ministry, she never once appears in direct intercourse with her Son. She may sometimes have been with him in his many circuits of Galilee, but you will search in vain for her name among the women who accompanied him, and who ministered to him. Between the words spoken to her at Cana, and those addressed to her from the cross, not another word, addressed by

Jesus to his mother, is recorded in the Gospels. True, indeed, he speaks of her; and in such instances what was said seems to have been intended to moderate in the minds of his hearers their estimate of her position, as his mother. From the outskirts of a crowd that had gathered round him as he taught, the message was once sent in to him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brothers stand without, desiring to speak with thee." What they wanted with him, we do not know: it was on no friendly errand that his brothers came; they disliked his public preaching on the hillsides to the multitude; they thought him beside himself. They expected, on this occasion, that so soon as he got their message, he would give up the work in which he was engaged, and come to them,—that he would feel that his mother and they had a claim upon his attention, superior to that of the motley company that was pressing in upon him. It was a case in many respects like that in the Temple, of a competition between two kinds or classes of obligations. Very striking was

the way in which Jesus in this instance acted. As soon as he heard the message, he exclaimed, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" Then, looking around, he stretches forth his hands to his disciples (and it is but rarely that any gesture of our Lord is chronicled in the Gospel story), and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Another time, as he was speaking with great power and effect, one of his hearers, struck with admiration, broke forth with the exclamation, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!" "Yea," said Jesus, checking instantly and emphatically that spirit which had prompted the exclamation,—"yea, rather blessed is he that heareth the word of God, and doeth it."

Mary was highly favored. With Gabriel and with all generations of our race, we are prepared to call her blessed. We are prepared to render all due honor to that relation-

ship in which she stood to the Redeemer of mankind. Among all the earthly distinctions and dignities that could have been bestowed upon a woman, the very greatest, we believe, was that which was thus conferred on Mary. And to the reverential regard which this relationship demands, we are prepared to add the still higher regard due to her genuine modesty, her simple faith. Nor are we sure but that, in the depth of our recoil from the superstitious reverence that has gathered round her name, we have overlooked and failed to do full justice to the simplicity, the beauty, the retiringness of that piety which makes her among the pious women of the Gospels what John was among the apostles of our Lord. But when asked to worship her, to pray to her as the mother of the Lord, to entreat that she will exert her influence with her Divine Son, is it possible to overlook that treatment which she met with at our Lord's own hands when here upon earth; is it possible to put away from us the thought that, in that very treatment, he was prophetically

uttering his own solemn protest against any such idolatrous magnifying of the position and relationship in which it pleased God that she should stand to him? We say this in the spirit of no mere ecclesiastical quarrel with the worship of the Virgin. We know how soon it was that Paganism mingled its superstitions with the simple worship of the Crucified; and we can well, therefore, understand how, in virtue of all the gentle and sacred associations that linked themselves with her name, her character, her peculiar connexion with Jesus, Mary should have come to be regarded with an idolatrous regard. Nay, further, looking back upon those dark ages when, under the grinding tread of Northern barbarism, the civilization of Southern Europe was well-nigh obliterated, we can see a beauty, a tenderness, a power in the worship of Mary; in the prayers and the hymns addressed to her, which turned them into a softening and civilizing element. Nay, further still, were we asked, among all the idolatries that have prevailed upon this idol-loving,

idol-worshipping world of ours, to say which one of them it was that touched the finest chords of the human heart, awoke the purest and tenderest emotions, had the best and most humanizing effect, we do not know but that we should fix upon this worship of the Virgin. But delivered, as we have been, from the bondage of the Middle-Age superstitions; with that narrative in our hands which tells us how our Lord himself dealt with Mary; standing as we do, or ought to do, in the full light of that great truth, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,"—it can not but be matter of surprise, that this worship of the Virgin should still prevail in so many of the enlightened countries of Christendom; suggesting the reflection, how slowly it is that the human spirit emancipates itself from any natural, long-continued, and fondly cherished superstition.

Keeping now the whole history of Mary's previous connexion with our Lord before our eye, and especially their intercourse during

the three years of his public ministry, let us dwell for a moment or two upon Christ's recognition of her from the cross. This affectionate recognition in his dying agonies, must have been peculiarly grateful to Mary. His departure from Nazareth, to which he seems to have paid only one short visit afterwards; his separation from the members of his own family; his engrossment with the great objects of his public life; the checks he had imposed upon her interference; the manner in which he had publicly spoken of her; all these must have created something like a feeling of estrangement in Mary's breast, as if he had ceased to be to her all that he once was. How pleasing to her then to learn from that look and speech of kindness, that his love for her remained unchanged. How soothing to her motherly affection to receive this last, this parting token of his undying affection for her! She may banish all her fears, bury all her suspicions; that Son of hers, he loves her still, loves her as he had ever done; he cannot die without assuring her of that

love. But it is more than a simple expression of affection that comes here from the Redeemer's lips. There is a thoughtful care for Mary's future earthly comfort, the securing for her the attention of another son, the providing for her the shelter of a new home. The dying Jesus has present to his thoughts the bereaved, the desolate condition in which his death will leave his mother; he will make all the provision he can towards alleviating her distress; silver and gold he has none to give her, but he has what silver and gold could never buy,—a hold and power over the heart of one who, if he be well described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, might almost as aptly be described as the disciple who loved Jesus. That hold he will now exercise on her behalf. "Woman, behold thy son!" Woman, not mother: he might, upon this occasion, have restrained himself from calling her so, lest the very mention of her relationship to him should mark her out to that unfriendly crowd, and expose her to their ill-treatment. He is but repeating, however, on

the cross, the address of the marriage-feast—"Woman, behold thy son!" Mary, perhaps up to that moment, had cherished some hope of his deliverance; but at that word this hope gives way; she is to lose him; he is to be her Son no more; that tie is to be broken, and a new one created in its stead. A better, kinder son than John, Jesus could not have provided; but, alas! Mary feels that he can never fill that Son's place; still there is a great kindness in selecting such a substitute.

To John, no name, no epithet is applied; Jesus simply looks at him and says, "*Behold thy mother!*" John had already been kind to Mary, was at that moment doing what he could to comfort her, would have cared for her, though no special charge of this kind had been given; but a son's place, that son's place, he could not have felt warranted to assume. Now, however, when Jesus with his dying breath calls upon him to occupy it, he counts it as a high honor conferred upon him. He undertakes the trust, and proceeds to execute it in the promptest and most delicate way.

Was he but interpreting aright the look that Jesus gave him, or was he only obeying an impulse of thoughtful, son-like affection in his own breast? However it was, he saw that Mary's strength was failing, that she was unfit for the closing scene; he instantly led her away to his own home in the city. She was not at the cross when the darkness descended; she was not there when the last and bitterest agonies were borne. You search for her in vain among the women who stood afar off beholding to the last. By John's kind act of instant withdrawal, she was saved what she might not have had strength to bear; and though that withdrawal was neither prescribed nor suggested by our Lord himself, one can well imagine with what a grateful look he would follow that son as he discharged this the first office of his new relationship; how pleased he too would be that a mother's heart was spared the pangs of witnessing that suffering which drew from him the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Mary showed the submissiveness of her dis-

position in yielding to John's suggestion, and retiring from the cross, and you never see her but once again in the Gospel narrative. Neither at the resurrection nor at the ascension, nor during the forty days that intervened between them, is her name mentioned, or does she appear. The one and only glance we get of her is in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where her name and that of our Lord's brother, who had come then to believe on him, are mentioned among the hundred and twenty who, after the ascension, continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promise of the Spirit.

And now, in conclusion, in that love which in his latest hours Jesus showed to Mary, let us hail the great and perfect example of filial affection he has left behind him. In that mingling with the broader thoughts of a world's redemption which must then have occupied his thoughts, the thoughtful care for her earthly comfort, let us see the evidence of how essential a part of all true religion it is to provide, as God enables us, for those

whom we leave behind us in this world. Let no pretext of other and higher obligations weaken within our breasts the sense of our obligation to discharge this duty before we die.

From our Saviour's treatment of Mary let us learn, too, to put in their right place, to estimate according to their real worth, all earthly, all external distinctions. To be the mother of our Lord, that raised her above all other women,—and we gladly join with all who, upon that ground, would call her blessed; yet would we still more wish to join heart and soul in our Lord's own saying, that "more blessed is he who heareth the word of God, and doeth it." To be the nearest herald, the immediate harbinger of Jesus, that raised John the Baptist above all the prophets, and ranked him among the greatest of the children of men. But yet there is another connexion with Christ, higher and still more honorable—a connexion in comparison with which the closest of mere external or official bonds sink into absolute insignificance—that inward, that

spiritual, that eternal tie which binds the humble, contrite, trustful spirit to the Redeemer. To be the least in his kingdom, to be the least among those who truly love and faithfully obey him, is a more enduring, a more illustrious distinction than to be the highest among those upon whom the honors of this world are heaped. And let us bless God for it, that this, the highest honor to which humanity can be exalted, is one that is within the reach of all. It cometh through humility and faith and love; it cometh through the weight of our sin being felt, the worth of our Redeemer being appreciated. It cometh through our becoming as little children, and yielding ourselves up to those gracious influences of the Divine Spirit, by which alone the proud heart can be humbled, and the doubtful heart be assured, and the unloving heart be brought to love. It cometh through the eye of faith being opened to discern the closeness and the reality of the unseen world, that world of spirits, whose all-engulfing bosom, when a few more of these

numbered years of ours on earth are over, shall have received us all. It cometh from our giving to all that concerns our spiritual state, our spiritual welfare and preparation for futurity, that predominance in our regards, our affections, our lives, to which their inherent, their surpassing worth, entitles them. It springs from our caring less for the honor that cometh from man, and more for that honor which cometh from God only.

Finally, let us realize those relationships to one another established in Christ our Lord, which, in their closeness, their blessedness, their enduringness, so far outmeasure all the other relationships of this human life. Why was John selected to take Christ's place, to be a second son to Mary? Why was Mary so specially committed to his charge? She had other sons, upon whom the duty naturally devolved. They, indeed, as yet were unbelievers; and upon that ground might fitly have been excluded. But were there not two of her own sister's sons among the twelve? Why pass the sister and the nephews over,

and select John to stand to her in this new relationship? It may have been that John was better placed than they, as to outward circumstances abler to provide a home for the bereaved; but can we doubt that another and still weightier consideration determined the Saviour's choice—the spiritual affinity between John and Mary; his capacity to enter into all her sorrows; his power by sympathy to support? And ties kindred to those which bound John and Mary together, do they not still bind together those whose hearts have been taught to beat in unison, and who have been formed to be mutual helps and comforts amid the trials and bereavements of life? Thank God for it, if he has given you any such support as Mary and John found in each other; and rejoice in the belief, that those relationships which are grounded on and spring out of our oneness in Jesus Christ, partake not of the mutability of this earthly scene, but, destined to outlive it, are impressed with the seal of eternity.

X.

The Darkness and the Desertion.*

THE full, bright sun of an eastern sky has been looking down on what these men are doing who have nailed Jesus to the cross, and are standing mocking and gibing him. The mid-day hour has come; when suddenly there falls a darkness which swallows up the light, and hangs a funeral pall around the cross:—no darkness of an eclipse—that could not be as the moon then stood—no darkness which any natural cause whatever can account for. As we think of it, many questions rise to which no answer can now be given. Did it come slowly on, deepening and deepening till it reached its point of thickest gloom? or was

* Mark xv. 33, 34.

it, as we incline to believe, as instantaneous in its entrance as its exit: at the sixth hour, covering all in a moment with its dark mantle; at the ninth hour, in a moment lifting that mantle off? Was it total or partial: a darkness deep as that of moonless, starless midnight, wrapping the cross so thickly round, that not the man who stood the nearest to it could see aught of the sufferer? Or was it the darkness of a hazy twilight obscuring but not wholly concealing, which left the upraised form of the Redeemer dimly visible through the gloom? Was it local and limited, confined to Jerusalem or Judea; or did it spread over the entire enlightened portion of the globe? We cannot tell. We may say of it, and say truly, that it was inanimate nature, supplying, in her mute elements, that sympathy with her suffering Lord which was denied by man. Men gazed rudely on the sight, but the sun refused to look on it, hiding his face for a season. Men would leave the Crucified, exposed in shame and nakedness, to die; but an unseen hand was stretched forth

to draw the drapery of darkness around the sufferer, and hide him from vulgar gaze.

But the truest and deepest significance of this darkness is as a type or emblem of the horror of that great darkness which at this period enveloped the spirit of the Redeemer. The outer incidents, if there were any, of those three hours of darkness, remain untold. We are left only to believe that its sudden descent wrought like a spell upon the actors and spectators; it stopped each wagging head, it silenced each gibing tongue; not a word seems to have been spoken, not a thing done; there they stood, or there they lay, with that spell upon them, wondering what this darkness meant. We can easily enough imagine what *they* may have fancied or felt during that strange period of suspense; but who can imagine what He was thinking of, how He, the Saviour, was feeling in that dread and awful interval? No eye perhaps may have pierced the outer darkness that shrouded his suffering body; still less may any human eye penetrate that deeper darkness which shrouded

his suffering soul. We are left here without a single external index; not a look, a word, an act, to tell us what was going on within the Redeemer's spirit,—till the ninth hour came, the moment which preceded the rolling away of the darkness, and the return of the clear shining of the day, and then the only sound that strikes the ear is the agonizing cry—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—a cry wrung, as it were, from the sufferer's lips, when the severe agony of his soul has reached its last, its culminating, its closing point; a cry which, revealing somewhat of the interior of the burdened heart from which it springs, leaves still more unrevealed; a cry which, after we have listened to it, and pondered it, and turned it over and over again in our thoughts, seems to grow darker instead of brighter to our eye, and of which we become at last convinced that it was the simple, spontaneous, irrepressible, outcry of a spirit tried to the last limit of endurance; the expression of what must

for ever remain to us an indescribable, unfathomable, unimaginable woe.

It would strip, indeed, this cry of the suffering Saviour of all difficulty and mystery, could we look upon him as a man, and nothing more; could we look upon him in dying as subject to the same mental and spiritual, as well as bodily weakness with any of ourselves; could we believe that such doubts and fears as have eclipsed the faith, and darkened for a time the hopes of other dying men, had place within his breast; could we interpret this saying as the utterance of a momentary despondency, a transient despair. We are disposed to go the utmost length in attributing to the humanity of our Lord all the sinless frailties of our nature; and had we seen him struggling in agony through the tedious death-throes of dissolution, the sinking body drawing the sinking spirit down along with it, and draining it of all its strength,—had it been from a spirit enfeebled to the uttermost, its very powers of thought and apprehension, of faith and feeling, faint-

ing, failing, that this sad lament proceeded, we can scarcely tell whether or not it would have been inconsistent with a right estimate of the humanity of Jesus to attribute to him such a momentary oppression under doubt and fear as should have forced this exclamation from his lips, prompted by his obscured perception of his personal relationship with the Father.

It stands, however, in the way of our receiving any such interpretation of this saying, that it came from one whose intellect was so clear and unclouded that the moment after it was uttered he could reflect on all he had to say or do in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and whose bodily powers were so far from being reduced to the last extremity of weakness, that it was "with a loud voice," betokening a vigor as yet unexhausted, that he uttered the despairing cry.

Besides, we have only to look back upon the few days that preceded the crucifixion, to find evidence that there mingled with the sufferings which Christ endured upon the cross

an element altogether different from the common pains of dying. On one of the last days of his teaching in the temple, certain Greeks desired to see him. Their earnest request sounded to his prophetic ear like the entreaty of the entire Gentile world. It threw him into a sublime reverie of thought. Bright visions of a distant future, when all men should be drawn unto him, rose before his eye; but with them the vision of a future even then at hand,—of his being lifted up upon the cross. A sudden change comes over his spirit. He ceases to think of, to speak with man. His eye closes upon the crowd that stands around. He is alone with the Father. A dark cloud wraps his spirit. He fears as he enters it. From the bosom of the darkness there comes an agitated voice: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name;"—some deep, inward trouble of the heart, a shrinking from it, a cry for deliverance, a meek submission to the

Divine will. You have all these repeated in order, and with greater intensity in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Here, once more, there is the agony, the shrinking, the petition, the acquiescence.

What so troubled Jesus in the Temple? what threw him into that bloody sweat in the Garden? what drew from him these strong cryings for deliverance? Can any one believe that it was the mere prospect of dying upon a cross which thus shook his spirit to the very centre? To believe so, were to degrade him beneath a level to which multitudes of his followers have risen. Deaths far more formidable, more protracted, more excruciating, they have contemplated beforehand with unruffled composure, and endured with unshrinking fortitude. Shall the disciple be greater than the master? No; there was something more in that hour for which Jesus came into this world, something more in that

cup which he took into his trembling hands, than the mere bitterness of apprehended dissolution. He has himself taught us, by the language which he employed, to identify the hour and the cup. He has taught us, too, that this hour was on him in the Temple; this cup was there raised by him to his lips. The same hour was on him in the Garden; of the same cup he there drank large and bitter draughts. It was that same hour which came upon him on the cross, to run out its course during the supernatural darkness; it was that same cup which he took once more into his hands, to drain to the very dregs. Here also, as in the Temple, in the Garden, you have the same features,—the conflict, the recoil, the victory. Perhaps the inward trouble and agony of his soul reached a somewhat higher pitch on Calvary than in Gethsemane: that bitter cry—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"—sounds to our ear as coming from a profounder depth of woe than any into which Jesus had ever sunk before; but in source and in character

the sorrow of the Saviour's spirit was in each of the three instances the same—a purely mental or spiritual grief, unconnected in two of these cases with any bodily endurance, and, in the third, carefully to be distinguished from those pains of dissolution with which it mingled.

Whence did that grief arise? what were its elements? how came it to be so accumulated and condensed, and to exert such a pressure upon the spirit of our Redeemer, as to force from him those prayers in the Garden, this exclamation on the cross? It was because he stood as our great Head and Representative, and suffered in our room and stead: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities;" he made "his soul an offering for sin;" "he died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." The testimony of the Scriptures to the vicarious, sacrificial, atoning character of the sufferings and death of Christ, is clear, emphatic, multiform, and unambiguous. But when we go beyond the simple statements of

the Inspired Record, and, admitting the great fact of the Atonement, inquire into the how and the wherefore of that fact,—resolved to accept implicitly all that the Scriptures teach, but equally resolved not to go beyond its teaching, nor add any theories of our own to its simple and impressive lessons,—we feel ourselves on the borders of a region, too remote, too mysterious, for eyes like ours fully and accurately to survey.

Let us, however, that we may catch a distant sight of one inner fountain of our Redeemer's sufferings, approach it by a path which, for some distance at least, is not obscure. It is said in Scripture that Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree; it is said, also, that he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Our griefs he bore by sympathy; our sorrows he carried by entering into them and making them his own. That central heart of love and pity opened itself, at every point, to all the forms and varieties of human woe. Its sympathy stood free from all those restraints that lie upon

ours. Our ignorance, our selfishness, our coldness, our incapacity for more than a few intense affections, narrow and weaken the sympathy we feel. But he knows all, can feel for all; so that not a pang of grief wrings any human bosom but sends an answering thrill through the loving, pitying heart of our Divine Redeemer. Human sympathy, too, deepens, takes a peculiar character, a peculiar tenderness, according to the closeness and dearness of the tie which binds us to the sufferer. A mother's fellow-feeling with a suffering child is something very different from what any stranger can experience. And it is not simply as one of us, as a brother man, that Jesus feels for us in our sorrows. It is as one who has linked himself to our race, or rather has linked our race to him by a tie the nature and force of which we are little capable of understanding. Only we may say, that parent was never bound to child, nor child to parent, in a bond so close as that which binds Jesus Christ and those whom he came to redeem. It would need his own om-

niscience to fathom the depth and intensity imparted to his sympathy by the peculiarity of that relationship in which it has pleased him to place himself to his own.

Now, Christ's is as much the central conscience as the central heart of humanity. Conceive him entering into a connexion with human sin, kindred to that into which he enters with human sorrow, realizing to himself, as he only could, its extent, its inveteracy, its malignity : in this way taking on him all our sins, and letting the full impression of their inherent turpitude, their ruinous results, fall upon his spirit,—who shall calculate for us the bulk and weight of that burden which might thus come to be borne by him? Once, in a Jewish synagogue, he looked round upon a small company of men, and he was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts. Let us imagine that grief amplified and intensified to the uttermost by our Lord's taking upon himself the sin of the world. Let all the hardness of all men's hearts, all the hard speeches that ungodly

sinners have spoken, the ungodly deeds they have done; let all the impurity, and injustice, and cruelty, and profanity, and impiety which have been perpetrated under these heavens — of which the enmity and malignity which nailed him to the cross might be taken as a specimen and index; let all that vast accumulation of human iniquity be conceived of as present to the Redeemer's thoughts, appropriated and realized by him as the iniquity of those to whom he had linked himself by a bond of closest fellowship, of undying, unquenchable love; let all the sins of that world he came to save gather in and press down upon the pure and holy and loving spirit of the man Christ Jesus:—Do we not get a dim and distant sight of a fountain of woe thus opened within, sufficient to send forth waters of bitterness which might well-nigh overwhelm his soul, putting his capacity to suffer to an extreme trial?

Further still, may we not imagine that as he made thus the sins of our sinful world his own, and thought and dwelt upon that holi-

ness of God, upon which they were such terrible invasions; the wrath of the Holy One, which they had so thoroughly deserved, and so deeply had provoked; the separation from God, the banishment from his presence, the death they did so righteously entail; that, in the very fulness of that love and sympathy which made him identify himself with us men for our salvation, the horror of such a darkness settled over the mind of the Redeemer that the face even of his heavenly Father for a moment seemed obscured, that its smile seemed changed into a frown, that the momentary apprehension seized him that in himself that death, that separation from the Father, was about to be realized, so that from his oppressed, bewildered, faltering manhood, there came forth the cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Let us not forget that there was not, indeed could not be—the nature of the connexion forbade it—any absolute or entire desertion of the Son by the Father. "Therefore," said Jesus, "doth my Father love me, because I

lay down my life for the sheep." Could that love be withdrawn from Jesus when he was in the very act of laying down his life? "This," said the Father, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Was there ever a time at which he was more pleased with him than when he was offering himself up in that sacrifice so acceptable to God? Nor does the Son ever entirely lose his hold of the Father. Even in this moment of amazement and oppression it is still to God, as *his* God, that he speaks: "*My* God! *my* God! why hast thou forsaken me!" It was the sensible comfort only of the Divine presence and favor which were for the time withdrawn; the felt inflowings of the Divine love which were for the time checked. But what a time of agony must that have been to him who knew, as none other could, what it was to bask in the light of his Father's countenance; who felt, as none other could, that his favor indeed was life! On us,—so little do we know or feel what it is to be forsaken by God,—the thought of it, or sense of it, may make but a

slight impression, produce but little heartfelt misery; but to him it was the consummation and the concentration of all woe, beyond which there was and could be no deeper anguish for the soul.

I have thus presented to you but a single side, as it were, of that sorrow unto death which rent the bosom of the Redeemer, as he was offering himself a sacrifice for us upon the cross. Perhaps it is the side which lies nearest to us, and is most open to our comprehension. Certainly it is one the looking at which believingly is fitted to tell powerfully on our consciences and hearts—to make us feel the exceeding sinfulness of our sin, and set us hopefully and trustfully to struggle with the temptations that beset our path.

In a household which enjoyed all the benefits of high culture and Christian care, one of the children committed a grievous and unexpected fault; he told a falsehood to cover a petty theft; rebuke and punishment were administered, carried farther than they had ever been before, but without effect. The

offender was not awakened to any real or deep sorrow for his offence. The boy's insensibility quite overcame his father. Sitting in the same room with his obstinate and sullen child, he bent his head upon his hands, and, sobbing, burst into a flood of tears. For a moment or two the boy looked on in wonder; he then crept gradually nearer and nearer to his sobbing parent, and at last got up upon his father's knees, asking, in a low whisper, why it was that he was weeping so. He was told the reason. It wrought like a spell upon his young heart; the sight of his father suffering so bitterly on his account was more than he could bear. He flung his little arms around his father, and wept along with him. That father never needed to correct his child again for any like offence. And surely, if, in that great sorrow which overwhelmed the spirit of our Redeemer on the cross, there mingled, as one of its ingredients, a grief like, in origin and character, to that which wrung this father's heart, and melted his child to penitence, the sight and thought of it ought to

exert a kindred power over those for whom Jesus died.

A younger son is guilty of a great offence against his father. His elder brother, in acting the part of a mediator between the offending child and his offended parent, might voluntarily submit to the exact and the full punishment which his younger brother had deserved,—by doing so might turn away the father's wrath, and earn the title to a brother's gratitude. But what if the offender sees his elder brother, at the pure and simple impulse of love, melted into a profound and heart-breaking grief, yearning over him, weeping over him, taking on himself a suffering far more acute than that which the lash of parental discipline might righteously have inflicted on the offender, would not the sight of the pain that his conduct had given one who loved him so tenderly, tell most powerfully in the way of quickening him to a sense of his wrong-doing? Transfer this to our Elder Brother, the Mediator with our offended Father in heaven. The exact punishment

which our sin entails—remorse, despair, the sting of a torturing conscience, the felt abiding misery of a soul cut off from the Divine favor—Jesus could not literally bear. He has, indeed, borne that for us which has satisfied the Divine justice, and been accepted as a full and adequate atonement for our transgression; but may it not have been that the suffering in our room and stead, which was accepted of the Father, was part of the suffering which our great sin and his great love drew down on *him*, who, by linking himself to us by the tie of a common humanity, laid a brother's heart open to such a sorrow for our sin as none but the Eternal Son of the Father could have endured? Surely, in the consideration that it was in such kind of suffering with and for our sins that the great Atonement of the cross, in a measure at least, consisted, there is one of the most direct and powerful of appeals,—one singularly fitted to touch, to soften, to subdue.

I am very conscious how little anything which has as yet been said is fitted to throw

full or satisfactory light upon that most mysterious of all the mysterious sayings of our Lord—the plaintive, lonely, loud, and bitter cry which emanated from the cross, which, piercing the overhanging darkness, was heard with wonder in the heavens. It came out of the depth of an anguish that we have no plummet in our hand to sound; and we become only the more conscious how unfathomable that depth is, by trying it here and there with the line of our short-reaching intellect. Instead of hoping to find the bottom anywhere, let us pause upon the brink; adoring, wondering, praising that great love of our most gracious Saviour, which has a height and a depth, a length and a breadth in it, surpassing all human, all angelic measurement:—

"Oh, never, never canst thou know
What then for thee the Saviour bore,
The pangs of that mysterious woe
Which wrung his bosom's inmost core.
Yes, man for man perchance may brave
The horrors of the yawning grave;
And friend for friend, or son for sire,
Undaunted and unmoved expire,
From love, or piety, or pride;
But who can die as Jesus died?"

XI.

"It is Finished.."*

With the arrival of the ninth hour, the outer darkness cleared away, and with it too the horrors of that inner darkness, from whose troubled bosom the cry at last came forth, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That mental agony, one of whose ingredients—perhaps to us the most intelligible—I endeavored last Sunday to describe, had been endured. The hour for which he came into the world has run its course; the cup which with such a trembling hand he had put to shrinking lips, has been drunk to its dregs; the powers of darkness have made on him their last assault, and been repelled; the mo-

* Matt. xxvii. 47–50· Mark xv. 35–37; Luke xxiii 46; John xix. 28–30

mentary darkness of his Father's countenance has passed away. As the sun of nature dispels the gloom that for these three hours had hung around the scene, and sheds once more his illuminating beams upon the cross; even so the light of an answering inward joy comes to cheer in death the spirit of our Redeemer. It is not in darkness, whether outward or inward,—not in darkness, but in light, in full, clear, unclouded light, that Jesus dies.

The first, however, and immediate effect of the lifting from his oppressed and burdened heart that load of inward grief which had been laid upon it, was a reviving consciousness of his bodily condition, the awakening of the sensation of a burning thirst. Let the spirit be thoroughly absorbed by any very strong emotion, and the bodily sensations are for the time unfelt or overborne, they fail to attract notice; but let the tide of that overwhelming emotion retreat, and these sensations once more exert their power. In the shock of battle, the excited combatant may receive his death-wound, and be unconscious

of pain. It is when they lay him down in quiet to die, that exhausted nature betrays a sense of suffering. So it is, after a manner, here with Christ. His lips scarce feel their parchedness as they utter the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Too full, too agitated, is the soul within, to be keenly alive to bodily sensations. But now that the relief from inward agony has come, the cravings of nature return, and first among these the strong desire for something to alleviate the thirst. This thirst, however, so far from entirely engrossing his thoughts, serves but to suggest to the dying Saviour—and this shows, as we before remarked, how clear and calm and self-possessed he was to the very last—that among all the numerous prophecies which had spoken of the time and manner of his decease, of his being numbered with transgressors, of the shaking of heads, and the shooting out of tongues, the parting of his garments, the casting lots for his vesture, there still was one* about their giving him in

* See Psalm lxix.

his thirst vinegar to drink, which remained to to be fulfilled. As being, then, at once the natural expression of the feeling of the moment, and the means of bringing about the fulfilment of that prophecy, "Jesus said, I *thirst*."

In saying so, he made an appeal to the sympathy of his crucifiers, in the belief that they would offer him some of that sour wine, or vinegar which was the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers. Did Jesus know how that appeal would be met and answered? We cannot but believe he did; and if so, it stands out as at once the last act in point of time, and one of the lowest in point of degree, of that humiliation before men to which it pleased him to stoop, that he addressed himself as a petitioner to those who treated his petition as they did. Let us try to realize what happened around the cross immediately after the departure of the three hours' darkness. One might have expected that the natural awe which that darkness had undoubtedly inspired; the moaning cry, as from one

deserted, that came from the cross, as it was rolling away; the fresh sight of Jesus, upon whose pallid features there lingered the traces of his terrible agony; and, last of all, his asking of them to drink,—would have conspired to awaken pity, or at least to silence scorn. The coming back, however, of the light—relieving, perhaps, a dread they might have felt that in the darkness Jesus should escape or be delivered—seems to have rekindled that fiendish malignity which now found a last and most demoniac way of expressing itself. "Eli! Eli!"—no Jew could possibly misunderstand the words, or imagine that they were a call to Elias for help. The Roman soldiers did not know enough about Elias to have fallen on any such interpretation. That the words were taken up, played upon by the bystanders, and turned into a new instrument of mockery, shows to what a fiendish length of heartless, pitiless contempt and scorn such passions as those of these Scribes and Pharisees, if unrestrained, will go. One, indeed, of those around the cross appears to

have been touched with momentary pity, perhaps a Roman soldier, who, when he heard Jesus say, "I thirst," and looked upon his pale, parched lips, ran and took a stalk of hyssop. From what we know of the size of the plant, this stalk could not have been much above two feet long, but it was long enough to reach the lips of Jesus, the feet of a person crucified not being ordinarily elevated more than a foot or two above the ground. This circumstance explains to us how close to the crucified the soldiers must have stood; how near many of the outstanding crowd may have been; how natural and easy it was for Jesus to speak to Mary and John as he did. To that stalk of hyssop the man attached a sponge, and, dipping it in the vessel of vinegar, that stood at hand, was putting it to the Saviour's lips, when the mocking crowd cried out, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save him." This did not stop him from giving Jesus, in his thirst, vinegar to drink. The ancient prophecy he must unconsciously fulfil; but it did serve to half-extin-

guish the prompting upon which he had begun to act, and induce him to take up into his own lips, and to repeat the current mockery, "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down."

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "*It is finished!*" It does not fall in with the character or purpose of these Lectures, intended to be as purely as possible expository, to take up this memorable expression of our dying Lord, and use it as a text out of which a full exposition of the doctrine of the Cross might be derived. Rather, as being more in accordance with our present design, let us endeavor to conceive of, and to enter into, as far as it is possible, the spirit and meaning of the expression as employed by our Lord upon the cross.

First, then, as coming at this time from the Saviour's lips, it betokens an inward and deep sensation of relief, repose; relief from a heavy burden; repose after a toilsome labor. To the bearing of that burden, the endurance of that toil, Jesus had long and anxiously

looked forward. From that time, if time it may be called, when he undertook the high office of the Mediatorship,—from the beginning, even from everlasting, through the vista of the future, the cross of his last agony had risen up before his all-seeing eye, as the object towards which, notwithstanding the dark shadows cast before it, the thought of his spirit stretched forward. In what manner and with what feeling it was regarded by him in the period which preceded his incarnation, it becomes us not to speak, as we have no means of judging; but we can mark how he felt regarding it after he became a man.

In the earlier period of his ministry, Christ practised a strict reserve in speaking of his death. In spite, however, of that self-imposed restraint, broken hints were ever and anon dropping from his lips, sounding quite strange and enigmatical in the ears to which they were addressed. "I have a baptism," said he to his disciples, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

When near the end of his ministry, the

necessity for reserve was removed, Jesus spoke openly about his coming death, and always in such a way as to convey the very deepest impression of the profound interest with which he himself contemplated beforehand that great event. So eagerly did he look forward to it, so striking an influence had that prospect even upon his outward aspect and movements, that when for the last time, he set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that were to happen to him there came rushing into his mind, he "went before" the twelve, as if impatient to get forward. They were amazed, we are told, as he did so; and as they followed him, and gazed upon him, *they were afraid.* The reason of this rapid gait and strange expression he revealed, when he took them apart by the way, and told them what his thoughts had been dwelling on. There was but one occasion on which he could freely and intelligibly speak out the sentiments of his heart: it was when he stood with Moses and Elias on the mount, and there, even when invested with the glories

of transfiguration, the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem was the one chosen topic of discourse. As the time drew near, still oftener was that great decease before his thoughts; still heavier did its impending weight appear to press upon his spirit. It was not, it could not be any mere ordinary human death that so occupied the thoughts of Jesus Christ. We endeavored in our last Lecture to make it apparent to you that the true, the real sufferings of that death lay in another, far deeper region than that to which the ordinary pangs of bodily dissolution belong; and we cannot but believe that that internal conflict, that inner agony of soul, reserved for the last days and hours of our Redeemer's life, was broken, as it were, into parts, distributed between the Temple, the Garden, the Cross, for the very purpose of making it palpable, even to the eye of the ordinary observer, that the sufferings of the Redeemer's soul formed, as has been well said, the very soul of his sufferings. And when those mysterious sufferings, so long

looked forward to, at last were over, the load borne and lifted off, with what a deep inward feeling of relief, repose, must Jesus have said, "It is finished!"

Secondly, Connecting this expression with what went so immediately before—our Lord's remembrance of all that was needful to be done to him and by him in dying, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—it may reasonably be assumed that he meant thereby to declare the final close and completion of that long series of types and prophecies of his death which crowd the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. In the very number and variety of these types and prophecies, another attestation meets our eye to the pre-eminent importance of that event to which they point. If you take the twenty-four hours which embrace the last night and day of the Redeemer's life, you will find that more frequent and more minute pre-intimations of what occurred throughout their course are to be found in the prophetic pages, than of what happened in any other equal period in the his-

tory of our globe. The seemingly trifling character of some of the incidents which are made the subjects of prophecy at first surprises us; but that surprise changes into wonder as we perceive that they fix our attention upon the death of Jesus Christ, as the central incident of this world's strange history, the one around which the whole spiritual government of this earth revolves. By all those promises and prophecies, those typical persons and typical events and typical services,—the raising of the altar, the slaying of the sacrifice, the institution of the priesthood, the ark, with its broken tables and sprinkled mercy-seat, the Passover, the great day of atonement, the passage of the High Priest within the veil;—by the voice of God himself speaking, in the first promise, about the seed of the woman, and the bruising of his heel; by the wonderful Psalms of David, in which the general description of the suffering righteous man passes into those minute details which were embodied in the Crucifixion; by those rapt utterances of Isaiah, some portions of which

read now more like histories of the past than intimations of the future,—the eye of this world's hope was turned to that event beforehand, as backward to it the eye of the world's faith has ever since been directed.

But, Thirdly, that we may make our way into the very heart of its meaning, does not the expression, "It is finished," suggest the idea of a prescribed, a distinct, a definite work, brought to a final, satisfactory, and triumphant conclusion? Spoken in no boastful spirit, it is the language of one who, having had a great commission given him, a great task assigned, announces that the commission has been executed, the task fulfilled. Taking it as the simple announcement of the fact, that some great transaction was brought to its consummation, we ask ourselves, as we contemplate the entire circle of the Redeemer's services to our race, still running out their course, what part of these services was it of which it could be said that it was then finished? Here, in the foreground, we have to put that one and perfect sacrifice which he offered up

for the sin of the world. Through the Eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God, and by that one sacrifice for sin, once for all, he hath perfected for ever those that are sanctified; he hath done all that was needed to atone for human guilt, to redeem us from the curse of the law, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity.

But again, Christ's death upon the cross brought to a close that obedience to the Divine law, that perfect fulfilment of all the righteousness which it required; held out to us as the ground upon which we are to find immediate and full acceptance with our Maker. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be

a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Further still—though embraced indeed in the two particulars of the sufferings and services of the Redeemer already mentioned—there was finished upon the cross the new, the full, the wonderful revelation of the Father, that unbosoming of the Eternal, the opening up to us of the very heart of the Godhead, the exhibition of the mingled love and holiness of our Father who is in heaven. There was completed then that glorious, that attractive, that subduing manifestation of the love of God for sinful men, which carried the Divine Being to the extreme length of suffering and of self-sacrifice, and which has ever formed the most powerful of all instruments for pacifying the conscience, melting the heart, moulding the character, renewing and sanctifying the will.

Whether, then, he looked up to God, and thought of his having glorified his name, finished the work that had been given him to do; or whether he looked down to man, and thought of the saving power which his cross was to exert over millions upon millions of the human family, it may well have been to Jesus Christ a moment of intensest joy, when—his last pang endured, his last service rendered, his strictly vicarious work completed—he exclaimed, "It is finished!"

To Jesus Christ alone was given that joy in dying which springs from the knowledge that all the ends of living and dying had been perfectly answered. Looking upon the career he had pursued, he could see not a single blot nor blank space in the whole. Of what other man, cut off as he was in the midst of his years, could the same be said? When good and great men die in the full flush of their manhood, the full vigor of their powers, we are apt to mourn the untimely stroke that has laid them low, that has cut short so many of the undertakings they were

engaged in, deprived the world of so much service that it was in their heart to have rendered. Nor can any such look back upon the past without this humbling feeling in the retrospect, that many an offence has been committed, many a duty left imperfectly discharged. But for us there is no place for mourning, as we contemplate the death of our Redeemer, which came to close the one and only life which, stainless throughout its every hour, did so thoroughly and to the last degree of the Divine requirement accomplish all that had been intended. And for him it was as if the cup of bitterness having been drunk, the cry of agony as he drained the last drop of it having been uttered, there was given to him, even before he died, to taste a single drop of that other cup—that cup of full ecstatic bliss, which the contemplation of the travail of his soul, of the glory it rendered to the Father, the good it did to man, shall never cease to yield.

But to what practical use are we to turn this declaration of our dying Saviour? He

rested complacently, gratefully, exultingly in the thought that his work for us was finished. Shall we not try to enter into the full meaning of this great saying? Shall we not try, in the way in which it becomes us, to enter with him into that same rest? For the forgiveness, then, of all our sins, for our acceptance with a holy and righteous God, let us put our sole, immediate, and entire trust upon this finished work of our Redeemer; let us believe, that whatever obstacles our guilt threw in the way of our being received back into the Divine favor, have been removed; that whatever the holiness of the lawgiver, and the integrity of his law, and the moral interests of his government required in the way of atonement or expiation, has been rendered. Let us look upon the way of access to God as lying quite open to us; let us take the pardon; let us enter into peace with God; let us bring all our guilt and bury it in the depths of his atonement. Let us lay hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothe ourselves with it in the Divine presence; and

regarding the reconciliation with God, effected by the death of his dear Son, as only the first step or stage of the Christian salvation, let us throw open our whole mind and heart to the blessed influences that Christ's love, his life, his sufferings, his death, his entire example were intended to exert in making us less selfish, more loving, more dutiful, more thankful, more submissive, more holy.

There still remain, for one or two brief remarks, these last words of our Redeemer,— "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." The words are borrowed from one of the Psalms. Jesus dies with a passage of the old Hebrew Scriptures on his lips, only he prefaces the words by the epithet so familiar to his lips and heart, "Father." In the depth of his bitter anguish, under the darkness of momentary desolation, he had dropped this phrase. It had been then, "My God, my God!" But now, once more, in the light that shines within, around, he resumes it, and he says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." If the saying which went before,

"It is finished," be taken, as it well may be, as Christ's last word of farewell to the world he leaves behind, this may be taken as his first word of greeting to the new world that he is about to enter. *New* world, we say, for though, as the Eternal Son, he was but returning to the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, let us not forget that death was to the humanity of the Lord, —as it will be to each and all of us,—an entrance upon a new and untried state. It seems to us as if, in these last words of our Elder Brother, it was that nature of ours he wore which breathed itself forth in our hearing; that human nature which, when the hour of departure comes, looks out with trembling solicitude into the world of spirits, seeking for some one there into whose hands the departing spirit may confidingly commit itself. In the "It is finished," the voice of the great High Priest, the Eternal Son of the Father, predominates. In the "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," is it not the voice of the man Christ Jesus that mainly salutes

our ear? No timidity, indeed, nor fear, nor any such trembling awe as any of us might fitly feel in dying. Nothing of these; not a shadow of them here; yet certainly solemnity, concern, the sense as of a need of some support, some upbearing hand. And shall we not thank our Saviour, that not only has he made the passage before us, and opened for us, in doing so, the gate to eternal life, but taught us, by his own example, not to wonder if our weak human nature, as it stands upon the brink, should look out with an eager solicitude to find the hands into which, in making the great transition, it may throw itself?

And where shall *we* find those hands? He found them in the hands of that Father, who at all times had been so well pleased with him. We find them in *his* hands who went thus before us to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. He too found them there who has left us the earliest example how a true Christian may and ought to die. Considering the small number of the Lord's disciples, we may believe that Stephen was

not only the first of the Christian martyrs, but actually the first after the crucifixion who fell asleep in Jesus. Can we doubt that in dying the last words of Jesus were in Stephen's memory? There had been too many points of resemblance between his own and his Master's trial and condemnation, for Stephen not to have the close of the Redeemer's life before his mind. His dying prayer is an echo of that which came from his Master's lips; the same, yet changed. It might do for the sinless one to say, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." It is not for the sinful to take up at once and appropriate such words; so, turning to Jesus, the dying martyr says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," in that simple, fervent, confiding petition, leaving behind him, for all ages, the pattern of a sinner's dying prayer, modelled upon the last words of the dying Saviour.

XII.

The Attendant Miracles.*

In all its outward form and circumstance, there scarcely could have been a lowlier entrance into this world of ours than that made by Jesus Christ. The poorest wandering gipsy's child has seldom had a meaner birth. There was no room for Mary in the inn. She brought forth her first-born son amid the beasts of the stall, and she laid him in a manger. But was that birth—which, though it had so little about it to draw the notice of man, was yet the greatest that this earth has ever witnessed—to pass by without any token of its greatness given? No; other eyes than those of men were fixed on it, and other

* Matt. xxvii. 51–54; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47–49; John xix. 31–37

tongues were loosed to celebrate it. The glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds, and a multitude of the heavenly host, borrowing for a time the speech of Canaan, filled the midnight sky with their praises, as they chanted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Never was there a lowlier cradle than that in which the new-born Redeemer lay; but over what other cradle was there ever such a birth-hymn sung?

And as with the birth, so also with the death of Jesus. In all its outward form and circumstance, a more humiliating death than that of being crucified as one of three convicted felons, he could not have died. There was no darker, more degrading passage through which he could have been sent forth from among the living. But was that death of the Eternal Son of God to have no outward marks of its importance imprinted on it? Left to man, there had been none; but Heaven will not let it pass unsignalized. And so, at midday the darkness came and settled for three

hours around the cross; and when at the ninth hour Jesus gave up the ghost, the veil of the Temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom, and the rocks rent, and the graves opened. These were the external seals which the hand of the Omnipotent stamped upon the event, proclaiming its importance. But these seals were also symbols; they were more than mere preternatural indications that this was no common death. Each in its way told something about the character and object of this death. The mystery of those hidden sufferings of the Redeemer's spirit,—the inner darkening of the light of his Father's countenance,—stood shadowed forth in the three hours' darkness. The rending of the veil had a meaning of its own, which it scarcely needed an apostle to interpret. To the few eyes that witnessed it, it must have been a most mysterious spectacle. Jesus died at the third hour after mid-day; the very hour when eager crowds of worshippers would be thronging into the courts of the Temple, and all would be preparing for the evening sacrifice. Within

the Holy Place, kindling perhaps the many lights of the golden candlestick, some priests would be busy before the inner veil which hung between them and the Holy of Holies; that veil no thin, old, time-worn piece of faded drapery, but fresh, and strong, and thickly woven, for they renewed it year by year; that Holy of Holies—the dark, secluded apartment within which lay the ark of the covenant, with the cherubim above it shadowing the mercy-seat, which no mortal footstep was permitted to invade, save that of the High Priest once only every year. How strange, how awful to the ministering priests, standing before that veil, to feel the earth tremble beneath their feet, and to see the strong veil grasped, as if by two unseen hands of superhuman strength, and torn down in the middle from top to bottom,—the glaring light of day, that never, for long centuries gone by, had entered there, flung into that sacred tenement, and all its mysteries laid open to vulgar gaze. The Holy Ghost by all this signified that while as yet that first

tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest, the access to God, was not yet made manifest; but now, Christ being come, to offer himself without spot to God, neither by the blood of goats nor calves, but by his own blood, to enter into the true Holy of Holies, —even as he died on Calvary that veil was rent asunder thus within the Temple to teach us that a new and living way, open to all, accessible to all, had been consecrated for us through the rending of the Redeemer's flesh, that we might have boldness to enter into the holiest, and might draw near, each of us, to God, with a new heart and in full assurance of faith. Little of all this may those few priests have known who stood that day, gazing with awe-struck wonder upon that working of the Divine and unseen hand,—to them a sign of terror, rather than a symbol of what the death on Calvary had done. We read, however, that not long afterwards—within a year—many priests became obedient unto the faith; and it pleases us to think that among those who, from the inner heart of Judaism,

from the stronghold of its priestly caste, were converted unto Christ, some of them may have been numbered whose first movement in that direction was given them as they witnessed that rending of the veil, that laying OPEN of the Most Holy Place.

"And the earth did quake: and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened"—the main office, let us believe, of that earthquake which accompanied or immediately followed upon the death of Christ,—not to strike terror into the hearts of men; not to herald judgments upon this earth; not to swallow up the living in its opening jaws; no, but to shake the domains of death; to break the stony fetters of the dead; to lay open the graves, out of which the bodies of the saints might arise. It seems clear enough, from the words which Matthew uses—who is the only one of the Evangelists who alludes to the event,—that they did not come out of their graves till the morning of our Lord's own resurrection. It is scarcely conceivable that they had been re-animated before that time, and lain awake in their graves

till his rising called them from their tombs. Then they did arise, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many,—one certainly, of the most mysterious incidents which attended the death and resurrection of the Saviour, suggesting many a question: Who were they that thus arose? were they of the recently dead, recognized by loving relatives in the Holy City, or were they chosen from the buried of many bygone generations? Did they return to their sepulchres, or did the grave never more close over them? Did they after a brief appearance in the Holy City, pass into the heavenly Jerusalem? or did they linger upon this earth, to be the companions of our Lord during those forty days, so small a portion of which is occupied by Christ's appearances to his disciples, the rest spent where and how we know not; and did they, that ministry to Jesus over, go up with him into the heavenly places? All about them is hid in the deepest obscurity. Like shadows they come, like shadows they depart. This, however, their presence told, that the

voice which from the cross cried, "It is finished," went where sound of human voice had never gone before, and did what sound of human voice had never done. It was heard among the dead; it stirred the heavy sleepers there, and piercing the stony sepulchre, went quivering into ears long sealed against all sound. And when the third morning dawned, these bodies of the saints arose, to complete as it were the pledge and promise of the general resurrection of the dead which our Lord's own rising carried with it, and having done that office, silently and mysteriously withdrew. You may have sometimes seen a day in early spring, stolen from the coming summer, a day of sunshine so bright and warm, of air so bland, of breeze so gentle, that, as if fancying that her resurrection-time had come, dead nature woke, buds began to burst, flower-leaves to unfold, and birds to sing,—all to be shut up again in death, as the bleak withering winds of days that followed swept across the plain. Even into such a day did the appearance of these old tenants of the

grave turn that of our Lord's resurrection, lightening and enriching it with the promise of the time when all that are in their graves shall hear Christ's voice, and his full and final victory over death and the grave shall be accomplished.

Mark the Evangelist, to whom we are indebted for so many minute and graphic incidents in the gospel history, tells us that at the moment when Christ expired, the Roman officer in charge was standing over against him, within a few yards of the cross, gazing on the face of the crucified. He had halted there as the darkness rolled away. He heard that loud and piercing cry, as of one forsaken, come from the lips of Jesus. He saw the change come over the Saviour's countenance, the light that spread over those pallid features, the joy that beamed from those uplifted eyes. Another and a louder cry,—not now the cry as of one sinking in conflict, but of one rejoicing in victory,—when suddenly Jesus bows his head and gives up the ghost; that moment, too, the earthquake shook the earth,

and the cross of Jesus trembled before the Roman's eyes. The shaking earth, the trembling cross, impressed him less, as Mark lets us know, than the loud cry so instantly followed by death. He had, perhaps, been present at other crucifixions, and knew well how long the band he ruled was ordinarily required to watch the crucified. But he had never seen, he had never known, he had never heard of a man dying upon a cross within six hours. He had seen other men expire; had watched weak nature as it wanes away at death—the voice sinking into feebleness with its last efforts at articulation,—but he had never heard a man in dying speak in tones like these. And so impressed was he with what he saw and heard, that instantly and spontaneously he exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Foreigner and Gentile as he was, he may have attached no higher meaning to the epithet than Pilate did when he said to Jesus, "Art thou then the Son of God?" This much, however, he meant to say, that truly and to his judgment this Jesus was more

than human—was divine—was that very Son of God, whatever this might mean, which these Jews had condemned him for claiming to be. Such was the faith so quickly kindled in this Gentile breast. The Cross is early giving tokens of its power. It lays hold of the dying thief, and opens to him the gates of Paradise. It lays hold of this Centurion, and works in him a faith which, let us hope, deepened into a trust in Jesus as his Saviour. From such unlikely quarters came the two testimonies borne to the Lord's divinity the day he died.

The Centurion speaks of him as one already dead. The pale face and the drooping head tell all the lookers-on that he has breathed his last. The great interest of the day is over; the crowd breaks up; group after group returning to Jerusalem, in very different mood and temper from that in which they had come out a few hours before. It had been little more at first than an idle curiosity which had drawn many of those onlookers that morning from their dwellings. Cherish-

ing, perhaps, no particular ill-will to Jesus, they had joined the procession on its way to Calvary. They gather by the way that this Jesus has been convicted as a pretender, who had impiously claimed to be their king, their Christ. They see how irritated the High Priests and their followers are at him. It is an unusual thing for these magnates of the people to come out, as they now are doing, to attend a public execution. There must surely be something peculiarly criminal in this Jesus, against whom their enmity is so bitter. Soon these new comers catch the spirit that their rulers have breathed into the crowd, and for the first three hours they heartily chime in with the others, and keep up their mockery of the crucified. But from the moment that the darkness falls upon them, what a change! There they stand, silently peering through the gloom; no jest nor laughter now, nor strife of mocking tongues. Upon that cross, but dimly seen, their eyes are fixed. The wonder grows as to how all this shall end. It ends with those prodigies that accompany

the death. Appalled by these, they smite upon their breasts—as Easterns do in presence of all superhuman power—and make their way back to their homes; no noisy, shouting rabble, but each man silent, and full of thought and awe. Who or what, then, could that Jesus be whom they had seen die such a death,—at whose death the whole frame of nature seemed to quiver? Whatever he was, he was not what their rulers had told them. No false, deceitful man, no impious pretender. Was he then indeed their Christ, their king? They got the answer to those questions a few weeks later, when Peter preached to that great company on the day of Pentecost; and may we not believe that among those who listened to the great Apostle on that occasion, and to whom he spake as to the very men who, with wicked hands, had slain the Lord of glory, there were not a few of those who now returned to Jerusalem from Calvary, impressed and half-convinced, waiting but the work of the Spirit to turn

them into true and faithful followers of the Crucified?

Such was the impression made upon the Roman officer, and on a section of the by-standers. But the High Priests and their minions, the true crucifiers of the Lord,—what impression has all which has happened thus at Calvary made on them? Has it stirred any doubt, has it awakened any compunction, has it allayed their fears or quenched their hate? No; they witness all these wonders, and remain hard and unrelenting as at the first. Speaking of that obduracy, which stood out against all the demonstrations of the Lord's Divinity, St. Gregory exclaims, "The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of its light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received. But though the sense-

less elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God, and, harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance."

The only effect upon the rulers of the Jewish people of the sudden and unexpected death of Jesus was to set them thinking how the crosses and bodies which hung upon them might most speedily be removed. Their own Jewish code forbade that the body of one hung upon a tree should remain suspended over a single night: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, that thy land be not defiled."* As crucifixion was a mode of punishment originally unknown among the Jews, this command refers to the case of those who, after death by stoning or strangulation, were hung upon a gibbet. The Roman law and practice were different. Crucifixion was the mode of death to which slaves and the greater criminals were doomed. In ordinary circumstances, the bodies of the crucified

* See Deut. xxi.

were suffered to hang upon the cross till the action of the elements, at times otherwise aided and accelerated, wasted them away. Even when sepulture was allowed, it was thought profitable for the ends of justice that for some days the frightful spectacle should be exposed to the public eye. In no case under the Roman rule did burial take place on the very day of the execution. If that rule were in this instance to be broken, it must be under the special leave and direction of Pilate. Besides, however, the natural desire that their own rather than the Roman method of dealing with the crucified should be followed, there was another and more special reason why the Jews desired that the bodies should as quickly as possible be removed. Next day was the Sabbath; no common Sabbath either—the Sabbath of the great Paschal festival. It began at sunset. Only an hour or two remained. It would be offensive, ill-ominous, if on a day so sacred three bodies hanging upon crosses should be exhibited so near the Holy City. It would dis-

turb, defile the services of the holy day. Besides, who could tell what effect upon the changeful, excitable multitude this spectacle of Jesus might have, if kept so long before their eyes? A deputation is despatched, therefore, to Pilate, to entreat him to give orders that means may be taken to expedite the death by crucifixion, and have the bodies removed. Pilate accedes to the request; the necessary order is forwarded to Calvary, and the soldiers proceed in the ordinary way to execute it. They break the legs of both the others; they pass Jesus by. There is every sign, indeed, that he is already dead, but why not make his death thus doubly sure? Perhaps, even over the spirits of those rough and hardened men, the Saviour's looks and words, the manner of his death, the darkness and the earthquake, which they connected in some way with him, may have caused a feeling of awe to creep, restraining them from subjecting him to that rough handling which they were ready enough to give to the others. However this may have been, the shield of

that prophecy,—"A bone of him shall not be broken," guarded his limbs from their rude and crushing strokes.

One, indeed, of the soldiers is not to be restrained, and to make sure that this seeming death is real, he lifts his spear as he passes by, and thrusts it into the Redeemer's side; a strong, rude thrust, sufficient of itself to have caused death, inflicting a wide, deep wound, that left behind such a scar, that Jesus could say to Thomas afterwards, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." From that wound there flowed out blood and water, in such quantity, that the outflow attracted the special notice of John, who was standing at some distance from the cross; the blood and the water so distinct and distinguishable from one another, that this observer could not be deceived, and thought it right to leave behind him this peculiarly emphatic testimony: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." It has been thought that John was led to put such stress upon this in-

cident of the crucifixion, and to press into such prominence his own testimony as an eye-witness to its reality, on account of the convincing refutation thus afforded of two strange heresies that sprung up early in the Church: the first, that Jesus had never really died upon the cross, but only passed into a swoon, from which he afterwards revived; and the second, that it was not a real human body of flesh and blood, but only the appearance of one that was suspended on the cross. It may have been that the Evangelist had these beliefs in view. But whatever was his immediate object in testifying so particularly and so earnestly to the fact, it only puts that fact so much the more clearly now before our eyes, authorizing us to assume it as placed beyond all doubt, that within an hour or so after Christ's death—for it could not have been much longer, when a deep incision was made in the side of the Redeemer, there visibly flowed forth a copious stream of blood and water. Is that fact of any moment, does it give any clue to, or throw any light upon the

proximate or physical cause of the death of Christ? The answer to these questions we reserve for our next Lecture.

Meanwhile, let us give a moment or two more to reflection upon that strange variety of impression and effect which the crucifixion of our Lord had upon the original spectators. There were those whom that spectacle plunged into a despondency bordering on despair. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was not able to bear that sight, and the love of her Divine Son went forth, and withdrew her early from the trial of seeing him expire. His other acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding; half ashamed and half afraid; with something of hope, with more of fear; lost in wonder that he, about whom they had been cherishing such grand, yet false and earthly expectations, should suffer himself, or should be suffered by that Father—of whom he had so often spoken as hearing him always, who had himself declared that he was at all times well pleased with him—to die such a death as this.

As the darkness fell, perhaps a new hope sprung up within some of their breasts. Was Jesus about to use that darkness as a veil behind which he would withdraw himself, as he had withdrawn himself from those who were about to cast him from the rocky height at Nazareth? Had he gone up to that cross to work there the greatest of his miracles? and was he in very deed about to meet the taunt of his enemies, and come down from the cross that they might believe in him? Alas! if any such hope arose, the ninth hour quenched it; and when they saw him draw his latest breath, this band of friends and followers of Jesus turned their backs on Calvary, with slow, sad footsteps, to return, dispirited and disconsolate, to their homes. Mainly this was owing to the strength of that prejudice which had so early taken such strong possession of their minds, that the kingdom which their new Master was to set up was a temporal one. To that prejudice so sudden and so overwhelming a shock was given by the crucifixion, that, stunned and stupefied by it, these simple-

minded followers of Jesus were for a time unable to recall, and unprepared to believe, his own predictions as to his death. Upon the Scribes and Pharisees, the Chief Priests and rulers of the people, the six hours of the crucifixion had, as we have seen, none other than a hardening effect. The gentleness, the patience, the forgiving spirit, the thoughtfulness for others, the sore trouble of his own spirit, the supernatural darkness, the returning light, the sudden and sublime decease, the reeling earth, the opening graves;—all these, which might have moved them, had they not been possessed by the one great passion of quenching for ever the hated pretensions of this Nazarene—have no other influence upon their spirits than quickening their ingenuity to contrive how best, most quickly, and most securely, they can accomplish their design. And these are they of all that motley crowd, who knew the most, and made the greatest profession of religion! These are the men who would not that morning cross the threshold of Pilate's dwelling, lest they might unfit

themselves for the morrow's duties within the Temple! These are the men who cannot bear the thought that the services of their great Paschal Sabbath should be polluted by the proximity of the three crosses of Golgotha! They can spill, without compunction, the blood of the innocent. They can take that blood upon themselves and upon their children, but they cannot suffer the sight of it to offend their eye as they go up to worship upon Mount Zion. These are the men who, in their deep self-ignorance, in their proud and boastful spirit, were wont to say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." These are the men whose whole character and conduct are suggestive of the likenesses to themselves that have arisen in every age of the church, one of whose noted peculiarities is ever this, that to wound their pride, or expose in any way their hollow pretensions, is sure to draw down on all who attempt the dangerous office the very same

malignity of dislike and persecution that nailed our Saviour to his cross.

Upon many of the crowd which stood for those six hours around the cross, the events that transpired there appear to have produced that surprise, solemnity, alarm, and subdued state of feeling, they were so fitted to produce on the bulk of mankind. We have already ventured to express the hope that, with not a few of them, what they saw and heard prepared their minds and opened their hearts to receive the good seed which, scattered on the day of Pentecost by apostolic hands, was so watered with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

But are we wrong in imagining, of another and perhaps still larger proportion of those who returned, beating their breasts, to Jerusalem, that a few days, or a few weeks, brought them down to their ordinary and natural condition of indifference and unconcern? Yes, they would say, that was a wonderful forenoon; there was a strange concurrence of striking things about the close of

that strange man's life; but as to any further inquiry after him—the lending their ears to that gospel which set him forth as crucified to redeem their souls from death, and cover, by his mediation, the multitude of their sins—they became too callous, the world got too strong a hold of them, to admit of their giving any further or more earnest heed. Have not these, too, their likenesses among us? men capable of strong but temporary impressions. Bring them to Golgotha, set up the cross before them, let them see the Saviour die, and their breasts may own a sentiment akin to that which affected so many originally at Calvary: but they are morning clouds those feelings, it is an early dew this softening of their hearts; let the bright sun rise, the fresh breeze blow; let the day, with so many calls to business and pleasure come, and those clouds vanish,—this dew disappears. And yet the cross was not to be lifted up in vain. It hardened the Pharisees, it dispirited the disciples, it awed the multitude; but it saved the penitent thief, and it con-

vinced the unprejudiced Centurion. "I," said the Lord himself, contemplating beforehand the triumph of his cross,—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And when he was lifted up, even before he died, and in the very act of dying, he drew to him that Gentile and that Jew, each one the leader of a multitude that no man may number, upon whom the power of that attraction has since acted. God grant that upon all our spirits this power may come, drawing us to Jesus now, and lifting us at last to heaven.

XIII.

The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ.*

Had no one interfered, the body of our Lord had been taken down by the soldiers from the cross, by their cold and careless hands to be conveyed away to one of those separate burying-places reserved for those who had suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Not unfrequently, in such cases, friends or relatives came forward to crave the body at the hands of the authorities, that they might give it a more becoming burial. There was but one exception, the case of those whose crime was treason against the State,—the very crime for which Christ had, nominally at least, been condemned. In that instance the mode of disposal of the body pre-

* John xix. 33–35; Mark xv. 42–45.

scribed by law was rarely if ever departed from. But where are there any friends or relatives of Jesus in condition hopefully to interfere? That small band of his acquaintance, which has stood throughout the crucifixion beholding it afar off, is composed principally of women. John, indeed, is there, a witness of the closing scene, and of the preparation made for the removal of the bodies. But was Pilate, to whom application must of course be made, likely to listen to any petition that he might present? John knew something of the High Priest, but nothing of the Roman Governor. There was every thing in fact to discourage him from making any application in that quarter, even if the idea of doing so had occurred to him. But it is most unlikely that it had. For what could John, or the disciples generally, have done with the body of their Master though they had got it into their hands? It must be buried quickly,--within an hour or so. And where could these Galilean strangers find a grave at Jerusalem to lay it in, where but in

some exposed and public place of sepulture, unsuitable for the destiny in store for it?

At the fitting time, the fit instrument appears. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, an honorable councillor, a member of the Sanhedrim well known as such to Pilate, has either himself been present at the crucifixion, or hears how matters stand. Shall the body of Jesus pass into the rough hands of these Roman soldiers, and be dragged by them to a dishonored burial? Not if he can hinder it. He has a new sepulchre of his own, close by the very place where Christ has died, whose very nearness to the spot suggests to him how suitable a place it would be for so sacred a deposit. Joseph goes instantly to Pilate, and boldly asks that the body may be given to him. Pilate makes no difficulty regarding the alleged crime of Jesus. He never had believed that Christ was guilty of treason against Cæsar's government; does not now act on any such assumption. But Joseph has told him something about the time and manner of the Saviour's death which he had not

heard before, which greatly amazes and induces him to hesitate. Those Jews who had come to him a short time before, with the request that he would issue an order that the bones of the three might be broken and their bodies removed, must have come to him after the three hours' darkness, after the death of Christ. But they had told him nothing about that death. They had spoken as if the same means for expediting their decease had to be taken with all the three. Now, for the first time, he hears that Jesus had, even then, breathed his last; had died just as that mysterious darkness, which had troubled Pilate as it had troubled the crowd at Golgotha, had rolled away; as that earthquake, which had shaken every dwelling in Jerusalem, had been felt within his residence. Pilate will not believe it,—can scarcely credit Joseph's story,—must have a thing so strange attested upon better testimony. Waiving, in the meantime, all answer to Joseph's request, he sends for the Centurion, who, doubtless, told him all that he had witnessed; told him about the

loud voice, and the immediately succeeding death; told him what raised in the eyes of these two Romans, even to the height of a miracle, a death like this.

We should understand their feelings better were we as familiar as they were with the common course of things at a crucifixion. It is now fifteen hundred years since this mode of punishment ceased to be practised in Christendom; it was discontinued because of the sacredness, the spiritual glory which Christ's crucifixion had thrown around it. With eyes unfamiliar with its details, yet with imaginations that delighted to picture its cruelties and horrors, the priesthood of the middle ages put these materials into the hands of poets and painters, out of which the popular conceptions of the erection of the cross, and the sufferings on the cross, and the taking down from the cross, have for so long a time been drawn. There is much in these conceptions, that by using the means of information which we now possess, we can assure ourselves is incorrect. The cross was no such

elevated structure as we see it sometimes represented, needing ladders to be applied to get at the suspended body. It was seldom more than a foot or two higher than the man it bore; neither was the whole weight of his body borne upon the nails which pierced the hands. Such a position of painful suspension, causing such a strain upon all the muscles of the upper extremities, would have added greatly to the sufferings of the victim, and brought them to a much speedier close. The cross, in every instance, was furnished with a small piece of wood projecting from the upright post or beam, astride which the crucified sat, and which bore the chief weight of his body. The consequence of this arrangement was, that crucifixion was a much more lingering kind of death, and, in its earlier stages, a much less excruciating one than we are apt to imagine, or than otherwise it would have been. As there was but little loss of blood,—the nails that pierced the extremities touching no large bloodvessel, and closing the wounds they made,—the death which followed resulted from the processes of

bodily exhaustion and irritation; and these were so slow, that in no case, where the person crucified was in ordinary health and vigor, did they terminate within twelve hours. Almost invariably he survived the first twenty-four hours, lived generally over the second, occasionally even into the fifth or sixth day. The ancient testimonies to this fact are quite explicit, nor are modern ones wanting, although there are but few parts of the world now where crucifixion is practised. "I was told," says Captain Clapperton, speaking of the capital punishments inflicted in Soudan, a district of Africa, "that wretches on the cross generally linger three days before death puts an end to their sufferings."

So well was it understood by the early Fathers of the Church, by those who lived in or near the times when this mode of capital punishment was still in use, that life never was terminated by it alone within six hours, as was the case with Christ, that they all agree in attributing his death to a supernatural agency. Most of them, as well as many

of the most distinguished of our modern commentators, assign it to the exercise by Christ of the power over his own life which he possessed; in accordance, it was thought, with his own declaration: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." That Christ's death was entirely voluntary, submitted to of his own free will, and not under any outward pressure or constraint, is universally conceded. This entire voluntariness, however, it will at once appear to you, is sufficiently covered and vindicated when we believe that whatever the physical agencies were which combined to effect the death, it was an act of pure free will in him to submit to their operation. That without or independent of any such agency, Christ chose to accelerate his decease upon the cross by a simple fiat of his own will,—breaking the tie which bound body and soul together, was the solution of the difficulty very naturally resorted

to by those who had the clearest possible perception of the extraordinary character of this incident, and who knew of no other adequate cause to which it could be attributed.

Another solution, indeed, has been proposed, reserved for modern times, but not coming from our highest authorities, which would explain the speedy death of Jesus on the cross, by ascribing it to an extreme degree of bodily debility induced by the sleepless night, the agony in the Garden, the scourging in Pilate's Hall, and the mental conflict at Calvary. All these must undoubtedly have told upon the frame of the suffering Redeemer, and have impaired its powers of endurance. But we must remember that they found that frame in the very flower and fulness of its strength, free, we may believe, of all constitutional or induced defects. Nor should we, in order to make out this solution to be sufficient, exaggerate their actual effects. However acute the bodily endurance of Gethsemane may have been, we know that Jesus was supernaturally assisted to sustain them;

they passed wholly away when the mental agony which produced them ended. You see no trace of them in our Lord's presentation of himself to the band which arrested him, or in his appearances before Caiaphas and Pilate. The scourging was a not uncommon precursor of crucifixion, and could not have enfeebled Christ more than it did others. He bent so much beneath the weight of the cross that a temporary relief from the burden was given; but that he had not sunk in utter exhaustion was apparent enough, from the very manner in which he turned immediately thereafter to the daughters of Jerusalem, and from the way in which he spoke to them. Further evidence that Jesus did not sink prematurely under physical debility is afforded us by the fact, witnessed to particularly by many of the Evangelists, and which, as we saw in our last Lecture, made a strong impression upon the mind of the Centurion. The fact alluded to is this, that it was with a loud voice, indicating a great amount of existing vigor, that Jesus uttered his last fervent exclamation on

the cross. He did not die of sheer exhaustion, fainting away in feebleness, as one drained wholly of his strength.

Are we, then, to leave the mystery of our Lord's dying thus, at the ninth hour, in the obscurity which covers it; or is there any other probable explanation of the circumstance? It is now some years since a devout and scholarly physician,* as the result, he tells us, of a quarter of a century's reading and reflection, ventured to suggest—dealing with this subject with all that reverence and delicacy with which it so especially requires to be handled—that the immediate physical cause of the death of Christ was the rupture of his heart, induced by the inner agony of his spirit. That strong emotion may of itself prostrate the body in death, is a familiar fact in the history of the passions.† Joy, or grief,

* Dr. Stroud, in a treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, published in 1847.

† Ancient story tells us of one the greatest of Greek tragedians (Sophocles) expiring on its being announced to him that the palm of victory had been awarded, in a public literary contest in which he was engaged; of a father dying on its being told him that, on the same day, three of his sons had been crowned as victors in the Olympian games.—See Dr. Stroud's Treatise.

or anger, suddenly or intensely excited, have been often known to produce this effect. It has been only, however, in later times that the discovery has been made, by *post mortem* examinations, that in such instances, the death resulted from actual rupture of the heart. That organ, which the universal language of mankind has spoken of as being peculiarly affected by the play of the passions, has been found in such cases to have been rent or torn by the violence of its own action. The blood issuing from the fissure thus created has filled the pericardium,* and, by its pressure, stopped the action of the heart. In speaking of those who have died of a broken heart, we have been using words that were often exactly and literally true.

If this, then, be sometimes one of the proved results of extreme, intense emotion, why may it not have been realized in the case of the Redeemer? If common earthly sorrow has broken other human hearts, why may

* The shut sac or bag by which the heart is surrounded and enclosed.

not that sorrow, deep beyond all other sorrow, have broken his? We know that of itself, apart from all external appliances, the agony of his spirit in Gethsemane so affected his body that a bloody sweat suffused it,—a result identical with what has been sometimes noticed of extreme surprise or terror having bathed the human body in the same kind of bloody dew. Why, then, should not the agony of the Saviour's spirit on the cross—which we have every reason to regard as a renewal of that in the Garden—have told upon his physical frame in a way equally analogous to other results verified by experience? Still, however, had we nothing more positive to go upon, it could only be regarded as a conjecture, a thing conceivable and quite possible, that Jesus had literally died of a broken heart. But that striking incident, upon the nature of which, and the singular testimony regarding it, we remarked in the close of our last Lecture, puts positive evidence into our hands; and the precise weight of this evidence every recent inquiry into the

condition of the blood within the human body after death has been helping us more accurately and fully to appreciate. Let me remind you, then, that within an hour or two after our Saviour's death (it could not have been more), what the skilful knife of the anatomist does upon the subject on which it operates, the Roman soldier's spear did upon the dead body of our Lord,—it broadly and deeply pierced the side, and from the wound inflicted thus there flowed out blood and water; so much of both, and the water so distinguishable from the blood, as to attract the particular observation of John, who was standing a little way off. We cannot be wrong in fixing our attention upon a fact to which the beloved Apostle so especially summons it in his Gospel.

First, then, we have it now authenticated beyond reasonable doubt, that what John noticed, the copious outflow of blood and water, is precisely what would have happened on the supposition that the heart of our Redeemer had been ruptured under the pressure

of inward grief,—is precisely what has been noticed in other instances of this form of death. When it escapes from the blood-vessels, whether that escape takes place within the body or without, human blood within a short time coagulates, its watery part separating slowly from its thicker substance. When rupture of the heart takes place, and the blood which that organ contains passes into the pericardium, it ere long undergoes this change; and, as the capsule into which it flows is large enough to contain many ounces' weight of liquid, if, when it is full, the heart be pierced, the contents escaping exhibit such a stream of mingled blood and water as the eye of John noticed as he gazed upon the cross. This is what the anatomist has actually witnessed; numerous instances existing in which the quantity and quality of the blood escaping from a ruptured heart have been carefully noted and recorded. Having satisfied ourselves as to these facts, from regarding it at first as but an ingenious supposition, we feel constrained to regard it as in the highest

degree probable that Christ our Saviour died this very kind of death. But what shuts us up to this conclusion is, that no other satisfactory explanation can be given of the outflow of blood and water from the Saviour's side. When not extravasated—that is, when allowed at death to remain in the vascular system,—the blood of the human body rarely coagulates, and when it does, the coagulation, or separation into blood and water, does not take place till many hours after death. In rare instances—of persons dying from long continued or extreme debility—the entire blood of the body has been found in a half watery condition; but our Saviour's death was not an instance of this kind, and even though it should be imagined that what long-continued illness did with others, agony of spirit did with him, inducing the same degree of debility, attended with all its ordinary physical results; this, which is the only other supposition that can be held as accounting to us for what John witnessed, fails in this respect, that, pierce when or how it might, it could

only have been a few trickling drops of watery blood that the spear of the soldier could have extracted from the Redeemer's side. Inasmuch, then, as all other attempted explanations of the recorded incidents of our Redeemer's death are found to be at fault, and inasmuch as it corresponds with and explains them all, we rest in the belief that such was the bitter agony of the Redeemer's soul as he hung upon the cross, that—unstrengthened now by any angel from heaven, as in the Garden, when but for that strengthening the same issue might have been realized—the heart of our Redeemer was broken, and in this way the tie that bound body and spirit together was dissolved.*

But of what use is it to institute any such inquiry as that in which we have been engaged? or what gain would there be in winning for the conclusion arrived at a general assent? It might be enough to say here that, if reverently treated, there is no single incident connected with the life or death of our

* See Appendix.

Divine Redeemer, upon which it is possible that any light may be thrown, which does not solicit at our hands the utmost effort we can make fully and minutely to understand it. Even, then, though it should appear that no direct or practical benefit would attend the discovery and establishment of the true and proximate physical cause of the death of Christ, still we should regard the inquiry as one in itself too full of interest to refrain from prosecuting it. But would it not be wonderful, would it not correspond with other evidences of the truth of the Gospel narrative which the progress of our knowledge has eliminated, should it turn out to be true, as we believe it has done, that the accounts of the sufferings and death of Jesus, drawn up by four independent witnesses—all of them uninformed as to the true state of the case, and signally ignorant how that which they recorded might serve to reveal it—did, nevertheless, when brought together and minutely scrutinized, contain within them those distinct and decisive tokens which the advanced

science of this age recognizes as indicative of a mode of death, so singular in its character, so rare in its occurrence, so peculiar in its physical effects?

Would it not also give a new meaning to some of the expressions which in Psalms lxix. and xxii.—the two Psalms specially predictive of his sufferings and death—our Saviour is himself represented as employing? Read together the 20th and 21st verses of Psalm lxix.: "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." If the very kind of drink they were to offer him was not deemed unworthy of being specified in that ancient prophecy—the very smallness, in fact, of the incident making it serve all the better the purposes of the prophecy,—need we wonder if it were only the literal truth which the speaker uttered when he said, "Reproach hath broken my heart"? When so

much has turned out to be literally true, it is but ranking that expression with the others, when it also has that character assigned to it. Or take the 14th verse of Psalm xxii.: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Here, again, we feel that, if in other parts of that Psalm—if in speaking of the shooting out of the lips, the shaking of the head, the words that were spoken, the parting of his garments, the casting of lots for his vesture—the great Sufferer is recognized as describing that which did afterwards actually occur, it is not surprising if, in describing his own bodily condition, in speaking, as he does, especially of the state of his heart, he should be speaking of that which also was actually realized.

But there are positive benefits attendant on the reception of that view of the Saviour's death which I have now unfolded to you. It serves, I think, to spiritualize and elevate our conception of the sufferings of Calvary; it carries our thoughts away from the mere

bodily endurances of the crucifixion; it concentrates them on that mysterious woe which agitated his spirit, till the very heart that beat within the body of the agonized Redeemer, under the powerful impulse of those emotions which shook and wrung his soul, did burst and break. If the bloody sweat of the Garden, and the broken heart of the Cross, were naturally, directly, exclusively the results of those inward sorrows to which it pleased the Saviour to open his soul, that in the enduring of them he might bear our sins, then how little had man to do physically with the infliction of that agony wherein the great atonement lay! If we have read and interpreted aright the details of our Lord's sufferings in the Garden and on the Cross, these very details do of themselves throw into the background the corporeal part of the endurances, representing it in fact only as the appropriate physical appendix to that overwhelming sorrow, by which the spirit of the Redeemer was bowed down under the load of human guilt. This spiritual sorrow formed

the body of that agony of which the corporeal was but the shadow and the sign.

From the very heart of the simple but most affecting records of Gethsemane and the Cross, there issues the voice of a double warning—a warning against any such estimate of the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus as would assimilate them to the common sorrows of suffering humanity. As a man there was nothing in all that he had to endure from man, which can in any way account for his sweat being as great drops of blood in the Garden. In the rending of his heart upon the cross, his sufferings remain, even in their outward manifestations and results, inexplicable on any other supposition than that which attributes to them a vicarious character, representing them as borne by the incarnate Son of God, as the Head and Representative of his people. But whilst the very outward history of Gethsemane and the Cross pleads thus strongly against any lowering of our estimate of the true character and design of Christ's sufferings, does it not as

strongly and persuasively lift up its protest against those pictorial and sentimental representations of the Saviour in his agony and in his death, which make their appeal to a mere human sympathy, by dwelling upon and exaggerating the bodily endurances which were undergone? We approach these closing scenes of our Redeemer's life, we plant our footsteps in the neighborhood of the Garden and the Cross; as soon as we do so, we begin to feel that is very sacred ground we tread. We try to get nearer and nearer to the Great Sufferer, to look a little farther into the bosom of that exceeding sorrow of his troubled, oppressed, bewildered spirit. It is not long ere we become convinced, that in that sorrow there are elements we are altogether unable to compute and appreciate, and that our most becoming attitude, in presence of such a Sufferer as this—the One through whose sufferings for us we look for our forgiveness and acceptance with God—is one of childlike trust, devout adoring gratitude and love. It is too remote, too hidden a region this for us rashly

to invade, in the hope, that with those dim lights which alone are in our hands, we shall be able to explore it. It is too sacred a region for the vulgar tread of a mere human curiosity, or the busy play of a mere human sympathy.

But what chiefly commends to us the view now given of the Redeemer's death, is its correspondence with all that the Scriptures teach as to the sacrificial character of that death,—all that they tell us of the virtue of Christ's most precious blood. More clearly and immediately than any other does this view represent Christ's death as the proximate and natural result of the offering up of himself to God, the pouring out of his soul in the great sacrifice for sin. From the lips of the broken-hearted, these words seem fraught to us with a new significance, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself,"—all, even to the very death of the body, being embraced in his entire willingness that there should be laid upon him the transgressions of us all. It was his soul, his life, that Jesus

gave a ransom for many. The life was regarded as lying in the blood, and so it was the blood of the sacrificed animal that was sprinkled of old upon the door-posts, upon the altar, upon the mercy-seat,—the atoning virtue regarded as accompanying the application of the blood; and so, lifting this idea up from the level of mere ceremonialism, we are taught that "without shedding of blood," without life given for life, "there is no remission;" and so, still further pointing us to the one true sacrifice, we are told that not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood Christ has entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. It is the blood of Christ "which cleanseth from all sin." It is the blood of Christ "which purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." It is the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified. We know, and desire ever to remember, that this is but a figurative expression; that the blood of Christ stands only as the type or emblem of the life that was given up to God for us. But the

blood merely of a crucifixion does not fill up the type, does not put its full meaning into the figure. Crucifixion was not a bloody death, it was only a few trickling drops that flowed from the pierced hands and feet. But if, indeed, it was his very heart's blood which Jesus poured out in the act of giving up his life for us on Calvary, with what fuller and richer significance will that expression, "the blood of Jesus," fall upon the ear of faith! This, then, is he—his bleeding broken heart the witness to it—who came by water and by blood; not by water only, but by water and by blood. With minds afresh impressed by the thought how it was that the blood of Christ was shed; with hearts all full of gratitude and love, let us take up the words that the Spirit has put into our lips: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

XIV.

The Burial.*

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both rulers of the Jews, both members of the Sanhedrim,—the Jewish council or court, composed of seventy members, in whose hands the supreme judicial power was lodged. It was the right and duty of both these men to have been present at the trial of our Lord on the morning of the crucifixion. In common with the other members of the Sanhedrim, they in all likelihood received the early summons to assemble in the hall of Caiaphas. It would seem, however, that they did not obey the call; that, knowing something beforehand of the object of the meeting, of the spirit and design of those who summoned it,

* John xix. 38–42; Luke xxiii. 55; Matt. xxvii. 61.

they absented themselves. We infer this from the fact that when, after Christ's great confession, the High Priest put the question, "What think ye?" to the Council, they all condemned him to be guilty of death. But we are told of Joseph, that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of those by whom the arrest and condemnation of Jesus were planned and executed. In what way his dissent had been expressed we are not informed, but having somehow intimated it beforehand, it is altogether improbable that, without any demur on his part, he should have been a consenting party to the final sentence when pronounced. And neither had Nicodemus gone in with the course which his fellow-rulers had from the beginning pursued towards Jesus. When the officers of the Chief Priests and Pharisees came back to their employers, their task unexecuted, giving as their reason for not having arrested Jesus, that "never man spake like this man," so provoked were those Pharisees at seeing such influence exerted by Jesus upon their own

menial servants, that in the passion of the moment, they exclaimed, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

Perhaps the question about the rulers touched the conscience of Nicodemus, who was present on the occasion; perhaps he felt that it was not so true as they imagined that none of the rulers believed on Jesus; perhaps he felt somewhat ashamed of himself and of the false position which he occupied. At any rate, the haughty and contemptuous tone of his brethren stirred him up for once to say a word: "Doth our law," said he to them, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" A very gentle and reasonable remonstrance, but one which had no other effect than turning against himself the wrath that had been expending itself upon their officials. "Art thou also," they say to him, "of Galilee?" Nicodemus cowered under that question, and the suspicion that it implied. Neither then nor afterwards

did he say or do anything more which might expose him to the imputation of being a follower of Jesus; but we cannot think so ill of him as to believe that, beyond concealing whatever belief in Christ he cherished, he would have played the hypocrite so far as to let his voice openly be heard as one of those condemning our Lord to death.

Let us judge both these men as fairly and gently as we ourselves would desire to be judged. To what amount of enlightenment and belief as to the character and claims of Christ they had arrived previous to his decease, it were difficult to imagine. Both must have had a large amount of deep, inveterate Jewish prejudice to contend with in accepting the Messiahship of the Nazarene; not such prejudice alone as was common to the great mass of their countrymen, but such as had a peculiar hold on the more educated men of their time, when raised to be guides and rulers of the people. Over all this prejudice Joseph had already triumphed; there was a sincerity and integrity of judgment in him, an earnest

spirit of faith and hope; he was a good man and a just; one who, like the aged Simeon, had been waiting for the kingdom of God, the better prepared to hail it in whatever guise it came. He had thus become really, though not openly or professedly, a disciple of Jesus. We do not know whether Nicodemus had got so far. We do know, however, that the very first words and acts of Jesus at Jerusalem made the deepest and most favorable impression on his mind. It was at the very opening of our Lord's ministry, that this man came to Jesus by night. Instead of thinking of the covert way by which he came, only to find ground of censure in it, let us remember that he was the one and only ruler who did in any way come to Jesus; and that he came—as his very first words of salutation and inquiry showed—in the spirit of deep respect, and earnest desire for instruction. Let us remember, too, that without one word of blame escaping from our Lord's own lips, it was to this man that, at so early a period of his ministry, our Saviour made the clear and full dis-

closure of the great object of his own mission and death, preserved in the third chapter of the Gospel by John; that it was to Nicodemus he spake of that new spiritual birth by which the kingdom was to be entered; that it was to Nicodemus he said, that as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must He be lifted up; that it was to Nicodemus that the great saying was addressed, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Surely he who, up till near the close, was so chary of speaking about his death even to his own disciples, would not, at the very beginning of his ministry, have spoken thus to this ruler of the Jews, had he not perceived in him one willing and waiting to be taught. Christ must have seen some good soil in that man's heart, to have scattered there so much of the good seed. That seed was long of germinating, but it bore fruit at last, very pleasant for the eye to look upon.

It was the fault both of Joseph and Nicodemus, that they hid, as it were, their faces from Christ; that they were ashamed and afraid to confess him openly. But who shall tell us exactly what their state of mind, their faith and feeling toward him was; how much of hesitation both of them may—indeed, we may boldly say must—have felt as to many things about Jesus which they could in no way harmonize with their conceptions of the Great Prophet that was to arise? "Search and look," his brother councillors had said to Nicodemus, at that time when he had ventured to interpose the question which provoked them,—"search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Nicodemus had nothing to say to that bold assertion; nothing to say, we may well believe, to many an objection taken to the pretensions of the Son of the Galilean carpenter. In common with Joseph, he may have believed; but both together may have been quietly waiting till some further and more distinct manifestations of his Messiahship were made by Christ.

But why did they not, so far as they did believe in him, openly acknowledge it? Why did they not feel rebuked by that poor man, blind from his birth, dragged for examination before them, who witnessed in their presence so good a confession? It was because they knew so well that their brother rulers had agreed that, "if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." It was because they knew so well and felt so keenly what to them that excommunication would involve: for it was no slight punishment among the Jews to be expelled from the synagogue; it involved in its extreme issue consequences far more disastrous than a mere ban of admission into their religious assemblies; it involved loss of station, separation from kindred and the society of their fellow-men. To the poor blind beggar upon whom it actually was passed, that doom may have fallen but lightly; for he had never known much of that of which this doom was to deprive him. A very different thing this expulsion from the synagogue

would have been to Joseph and to Nicodemus. Let us not judge these men too harshly for the reluctance they showed to brave it; let us rather try to put ourselves exactly in their position, that we may sympathize with the hesitation which they felt in making any open acknowledgment of their attachment to Christ.

His death, however, at once put an end to that hesitation in both their breasts. They may not have been present at the crucifixion. They would not well have known where to take their station, or how to comport themselves there. They could not have joined in the mockery, nor were they prepared to exhibit themselves as friends of the Crucified. But though not spectators of the tragedy, they were somewhere in the immediate neighborhood, waiting anxiously to learn the issue. Could they, members of the same Sanhedrim, thrown often into contact, witnesses of each other's bearing and conduct, as to all the steps which had been taken against Jesus, have remained ignorant of each other's secret lean-

ings toward the persecuted Nazarene? Was it by chance they met together at the cross, to act in concert there? We would rather believe that, attracted by the tie of a common sympathy with Jesus, the sad news of his being taken out to Golgotha to be crucified, brought them that forenoon together; that they were by each other's side as the tidings reached them of all the wonders which had transpired around the cross, and of the strange death which Jesus died. The resolution of both is promptly taken; and it looks, certainly, as if taken with the knowledge of each other's purpose. Joseph goes at once boldly to Pilate, and craves the body of Jesus. An ancient prophecy, of which he knew nothing—one that seemed, as Jesus died, most unlikely of accomplishment—had proclaimed that he was to make his grave with the rich. This rich man has a new sepulchre, wherein never man lay, which he had bought or got hewn out of the rock, with the idea, perhaps, that he might himself be the first to occupy it. It lies there close at hand, not many

paces from the cross. He is resolved to open it, that it may receive, as its first tenant, the body of the crucified. Nay, further; as there are few, if any, now of Christ's known friends to undertake the task, he is resolved —his dignity, the sense of shame, the fear of the Jews, all forgotten—to put his own hands to the office of giving that body the most honorable sepulture that the time and circumstances can afford.

Once assured, on the Centurion's testimony, that it was even as Joseph said, Pilate at once gives the order that the body shall be committed into his hands. The Centurion, bearing that order, returns to Golgotha. Joseph provides himself by the way with the clean white cloth in which to shroud the body. The soldiers, at their officer's command, bear the bodies of the other two away, leaving that of Jesus still suspended on the cross. It is there when Joseph reaches the spot, to be dealt with as he likes. How quiet and how lonely the place, as the first preparations are made for the interment! few to help, and

none to interrupt. The crowd has all dispersed; some half dozen Galilean women alone remain. But is John not here? He had returned to Calvary, had seen but a little before the thrust of the soldier's spear; he knew that but a short time was left for disposing of the body. Is it at all likely that in such circumstances he should leave, and not wait to see the close? Let us believe that though, with his accustomed modesty, he has veiled his presence, he was present standing with those Galilean women. They see, coming in haste, this Joseph of Arimathea, whom none of them had ever known as a disciple of their Master; they see the white linen cloth that he has provided; they notice that the body is committed to his charge; they watch with wonder as he puts forth his own hand to the taking down of the body. Their wonder grows as Nicodemus—also a stranger to them, whom they had never seen coming to Jesus—joins himself to Joseph; not rudely and roughly, as the soldiers had dealt with the others, but gently and reverently handling

the dead. As they lay the body on the ground, it appears that this new-comer, Nicodemus, has brough with him a mixture of powdered myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds' weight. The richest man in Jerusalem could not have furnished more or better spicery for the burial of his dearest friend. It is evident that these two men have it in their heart, and are ready to put to their hands, to treat the dead with all due respect. Their fears disarmed, assured of the friendly purpose of those interposing thus, the Galilean women gather in around the pale and lifeless form. The white shroud is ready, the myrrh and the aloes are at hand, but who shall spread those spices on the funeral garment, and wrap it round the corpse to fit it for the burial? This is a service, one of the last and the saddest which our poor humanity needs, which, as if by an instinct of nature, woman's gentle hand has in all ages and in all countries been wont to render to the dead; and though the Gospel narrative be silent here, we will not believe that it was otherwise at

the cross; we will not believe but that it was the tender hands of those loving women who had watched at Calvary from morningtide till now, which offer their aid, and are permitted and honored to wipe from that mutilated form the bloody marks of dishonor which it wore, to swathe it with the pure linen robe, and wrap around the thorn-marked brow the napkin, so falsely deemed to be the last clothing of the dead.

One thing alone is wanting, that the manner of the Jews in burying may be observed—a bier to lay the body on, to bear it to the sepulchre. There has been no time to get one, or it is felt that the distance is so short that it is not needed. That body has, however, the best bier of all—the hands of true affection, to lift it up and carry it across to the new tomb which waits to receive it. The feet let us assign to Joseph, the body to Nicodemus, and that regal head with those closed eyes, over which the shadows of the resurrection are already flitting, let us lay it on the breast of the beloved disciple. The brief

path from the cross to the sepulchre is soon traversed. In silence and in deep sorrow they bear their sacred burden, and lay it gently down upon its clean, cold, rocky bed. The last look of the dead is taken. The buriers reverently withdraw, the stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre:—separated from the living—Jesus rests with the dead—

> "At length the worst is o'er, and thou art laid
> Deep in thy darksome bed;
> All still and cold behind yon dreary stone
> Thy sacred form is gone.
> Around those lips where peace and mercy hung
> The dew of death hath clung;
> The dull earth o'er thee, and thy friends around,
> Thou sleep'st a silent corse, in funeral-raiment wound."

The burial is over now, and we might depart; but let us linger a little longer, and bestow a parting look on the persons and the place,—the buriers and the burying-ground. The former have been few in number; what they have to do, they must do quickly; for the sun is far down in the western sky when Joseph gets the order from Pilate; and before

it sets, before the great Sabbath begins, they must lay Jesus in the grave. Yet hurried as they have been, with all such honor as they can show, with every token of respect, have laid that body in the tomb; they have done all they could. The last service which Jesus ever needed at the hands of men it has been their privilege to render. And for the manner in which they have rendered it, shall we not honor them? Yes, verily, wherever this gospel of the kingdom shall be made known, what they thus did for the Lord's burial shall be told for a memorial of them; and henceforth we shall forget of Joseph that hitherto he had concealed his discipleship, and acted as if he were a stranger to the Lord, seeing that, when Christ was in such a special sense a stranger on the earth, he opened his own new sepulchre to take him in; and we shall forget it of Nicodemus that it was by night he had come to Jesus, seeing that, upon this last sad day he came forth so openly, with his costly offering of myrrh and aloes, to embalm Christ for the burial. Of the Galilean women

we have nothing to forget; but let this be the token wherewith we shall remember them, that, the last at the cross and the first at the sepulchre, they were the latest at the grave: for Joseph has departed; Nicodemus and the rest are gone; but there, while the sun goes down, and the evening shadows deepen around, the very solitude and gloom of the place such as might have warned them away—there are Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to be seen sitting over-against the sepulchre, unable to tear themselves from the spot, gazing through their tears at the place where the body of their Lord is laid.

Let us now bestow a parting look upon the burying-ground. "In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in that garden a sepulchre." Plant yourselves before that sepulchre, and look around. This is no place of graves; here rise around you no memorials of the dead. You see but a single sepulchre, and that sepulchre in a garden. Strange mingling this of opposites, the garden of life and growth and beauty, circling the

sepulchre of death, corruption, and decay. Miniature of the strange world we live in. What garden of it has not its own grave? Your path may, for a time, be through flowers and fragrance; follow it far enough, it leads ever to a grave. But this sepulchre in this garden suggests other and happier thoughts. It was in a garden once of old—in Eden, that death had his first summons given, to find there his first prey; it is in a garden here at Calvary, that the last enemy of mankind has the death-blow given to him—that the great Conqueror is in his turn overcome. Upon that stone which they rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre, let us engrave the words—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." What a change it has made in the character and aspect of the grave, that our Saviour himself once lay in it! He has stripped it of its terrors, and to many a weary one given it an attractive rather than a repulsive look. "I heard a voice from heaven

saying"—it needed a voice from heaven to assure us of the truth—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." To such the grave is, indeed, a bed of blessed rest. Buried with Jesus, they repose till the hour of the great awakening cometh, when with him they shall arise to that newness of life over which no shadow of death shall ever pass.

APPENDIX.

It is in the hope that they may win for the explanation of Christ's death presented in the preceding pages a larger measure of attention than it has yet received, that the following letters from eminent medical authorities are appended :—

From JAMES BEGBIE, M.D., F.R.S.E.

Fellow, and late President, of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh; Physician to the Queen in Scotland.

My dear Dr. Hanna,—I cannot help accepting, as correct, the explanation which Dr. Stroud has offered—and which you have adopted, and so strikingly applied—of the physical cause of the death of Christ, namely, rupture of the heart, and consequent effusion of blood into the pericardium, the investing sheath of that organ.

Such a lesion accounts for the phenomena recorded in the Scriptures regarding him, namely, the earlier than usual cessation of life during crucifixion, and the

issuing of blood and water on the piercing of his side with the spear.

It must be borne in mind, however, that rupture of the heart is comparatively a rare affection, and that the cases of it on record are, so far as I know, limited to those advanced in life, or to such as have been laboring under some degeneration of the structure of the organ, a condition which rendered it liable to be torn when subjected to the pressure of severe physical exertion, or the weight of mental agony. Now, in regard to Christ, we know that at the period of his death he was in the prime of life; and that as morally he was "holy, harmless, and undefiled," so physically he was without spot or blemish.

How intensely does this consideration magnify the sufferings he endured! We see him in the agony in the Garden, and under the bloody sweat. We follow him to Calvary, and see him under the hiding of his Father's face, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. We cannot estimate the anguish of his holy human soul during these awful hours, when there was drawn from him that most touching language, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" but we can in some measure understand how his bodily frame, subjected to the full weight both of mental and bodily suffering, should yield and give way at the fountain of life, and how Christ, in his death, should thus literally fulfil the prophetic words of Old Testa-

ment writings concerning him: "Reproach hath broken my heart." I shrink from treading farther on this sacred ground, and remain, dear Dr. Hanna, yours affectionately,

J. BEGBIE.

10, Charlotte Square,
Edinburgh, 26*th April*, 1862.

From J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D., F.R.S.E.

Professor of Medicine and Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh; and Physician-Accoucheur to the Queen in Scotland.

My dear Dr. Hanna,—Ever since reading, some ten or twelve years ago, Dr. Stroud's remarkable treatise *On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, I have been strongly impressed with the belief that the views which he adopted* and maintained on this subject are fundamentally correct. Nor has this opinion been in any way altered by a perusal of some later observations published on the same question, both here and on the Continent.

That the immediate cause of the death of our blessed Saviour was—speaking medically—laceration or rupture of the heart, is a doctrine in regard to which

* Dr. Stroud himself points out that Russell, Edwards, Rambach, and other writers, had more or less correctly anticipated him in the belief that Christ had died from rupture or breaking of the heart

there can be no absolute certainty; but, assuredly, in favor of it there is a very high amount of circumstantial probability.

Let me try to state the arguments for this view in the form of a few brief propositions.

I. His death was not the mere result of crucifixion; for, 1st, The period was too short; a person in the prime of life, as Christ was, not dying from this mode of mortal punishment in six hours, as He did, but usually surviving till the second or third day, or even longer. 2dly, The attendant phenomena, at the time of actual death were different from those of crucifixion. The crucified died, as is well known, under a lingering process of gradual exhaustion, weakness, and faintness. On the contrary, Christ cried with a loud voice, and spoke once and again,—all apparently within a few minutes of His dissolution.

II. No known injury, lesion, or disease of the brain, lungs, or other vital organs could, I believe, account for such a sudden termination of His sufferings in death, except (1.) arrestment of the action of the heart by fatal fainting or syncope; or (2.) rupture of the walls of the heart or larger blood-vessels issuing from it.

III. The attendant symptoms—particularly the loud cry and subsequent exclamations—show that death was not the effect of mortal fainting, or mere fatal arrestment of the action of the heart by syncope.

IV. On the other hand, these symptoms were such as have been seen in cases of rupture of the walls of the heart. Thus, in the latest book published in the English language on Diseases of the Heart, the eminent author, Dr. Walshe, Professor of Medicine in University College, London, when treating of the symptoms indicating death by rupture of the heart, observes, "The hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, a piercing shriek uttered," etc. etc. The rapidity of the resulting death is regulated by the size and shape of the ruptured opening. But usually death very speedily ensues in consequence of the blood escaping from the interior of the heart into the cavity of the large surrounding heart-sac or pericardium; which sac has, in cases of rupture of the heart, been found on dissection to contain sometimes two, three, four, or more pounds of blood accumulated within it, and separated into red clot and limpid serum, or "blood and water,"—as is seen in blood when collected out of the body in a cup or basin in the operation of common blood-letting.

V. No medical jurist would in a court of law, venture to assert, from the mere symptoms preceding death, that a person had certainly died of rupture of the heart. To obtain positive *proof* that rupture of the heart was the cause of death, a *post-mortem* examination of the chest would be necessary. In ancient times, such dissections were not practised. But the

details left regarding Christ's death are most strikingly peculiar in this respect, that they offer us the result of a very rude dissection, as it were, by the gash* made in His side after death by the thrust of the Roman soldier's spear. The effect of that wounding or piercing of the side was an escape of "blood and water," visible to the Apostle John standing some distance off; and I do not believe that anything could possibly account for this appearance, as described by that Apostle, except a collection of blood effused into the distended sac of the pericardium in consequence of rupture of the heart, and afterwards separated, as is usual with *extravasated* blood, into those two parts, viz. (1.) crassamentum or red clot, and (2.) watery serum. The subsequent puncture from below of the distended pericardial sac would most certainly, under such circumstances, lead to the immediate ejection and escape of its sanguineous contents in the form of red clots of blood and a stream of watery serum, exactly corresponding to that description given in the sacred narrative, "and forthwith came there out blood *and* water,"—an appearance which no other natural event or mode of death can explain or account for.

VI. Mental emotions and passions are well known by all to affect the actions of the heart in the way of

* Its size may be inferred from the Apostle Thomas being asked to thrust not his "finger," but his "hand" into it.—John xx.

palpitation, fainting, etc. That these emotions and passions, when in overwhelming excess, occasionally though rarely, produce laceration or rupture of the walls of the heart, is stated by most medical authorities who have written on the affections of this organ; and our poets even allude to this effect as an established fact,—

. . . . "The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break."

But if ever a human heart was riven and ruptured by the mere amount of mental agony that was endured, it would surely—we might even argue *à priori*—be that of our Redeemer, when, during these dark and dreadful hours on the cross, He, "being made a curse for us," "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," and suffered for sin, the malediction of God and man, "full of anguish," and now "exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

There are theological as well as medical arguments in favor of the opinion that Christ in reality died from a ruptured or broken heart. You know them infinitely better than I do. But let me merely observe that

VII. If the various wondrous prophecies and minute predictions in Psalms xxii. and lxix., regarding the circumstances connected with Christ's death be justly held as literally true, such as, "They pierced my hands and my feet," "They part my gar-

ments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," etc., why should we regard as merely metaphorical, and not as literally true also, the declarations in the same Psalms, "Reproach hath broken my heart," "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels?" And

VIII. Death by mere crucifixion was not a form of death in which there was much, if indeed any, shedding of blood. Punctured wounds do not generally bleed; and the nails, besides being driven through parts that were not provided with large blood-vessels, necessarily remained plugging up the openings made by their passage. The whole language and types of Scripture, however, involve the idea that the atonement for our sins was obtained by the *blood* of Christ shed for us during his death on the cross. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." This shedding, however, was assuredly done in the fullest possible sense, under the view that the immediate cause of his dissolution was rupture of the heart, and the consequent fatal escape of His heart- and life-blood from the central cistern of the circulation.

It has always appeared—to my medical mind at least—that this view of the mode by which death was produced in the human body of Christ, intensifies all our thoughts and ideas regarding the immensity of the astounding sacrifice which He made for

our sinful race upon the cross. Nothing can possibly be more striking and startling than the appalling and terrible passiveness with which God as man submitted, for our sakes, His incarnate body to all the horrors and tortures of the crucifixion. But our wonderment at the stupendous sacrifice only increases when we reflect that, while thus enduring for our sins the most cruel and agonizing form of corporeal death, He was ultimately "slain," not by the effects of the anguish of his corporeal frame, but by the effects of the mightier anguish of His mind; the fleshy walls of His heart—like the veil, as it were, in the temple of His human body—becoming rent and riven, as for us "He poured out his soul unto death;"—"the travail of His soul" in that awful hour thus standing out as unspeakably bitterer and more dreadful than even the travail of his body.

Believe me, my dear Dr. Hanna, ever sincerely yours,

J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D.

52 Queen Street, Edinburgh,
May 1, 1862.

From JOHN STRUTHERS, M.D., F.R.C.S.
Lecturer on Anatomy, Surgeons' Hall.

Dear Dr. Hanna,—I do not think that any intelligent medical man will read Dr. Stroud's treatise

On the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ, without being satisfied with the explanation. No other hypothesis will satisfactorily explain the separate escape of blood and water from a wound in that region, and all the incidents attending the death of Christ are entirely accounted for by the hypothesis of rupture of the heart, and the separation of the watery and the red constituents of the blood within the distended pericardium, on the puncture of which they would escape forcibly. The various cases of rupture of the heart from mental emotion, with similar separation of the watery and the red parts of the blood, collected by Dr. Stroud, and also his cases of bloody sweat, form a body of extremely interesting illustration and proof, and altogether the treatise is a monument of careful research and cautious reasoning. To medical men it has a special additional value as accounting for incidents which force themselves upon the medical mind for explanation. Those of my brethren who have not read Dr. Stroud's book, must be much puzzled, as I was before I had read it, to account for the escape of water after, and distinct from, blood, from a wound in that part of the body—supposing the words "blood and water" to be accepted literally, which there need be no hesitation now in doing. Of course, the rupture of the heart is in every aspect the great point of interest, the escape of the blood and water being of importance only as

an incident which, having been seen, requires explanation, and as further bearing on the previous rupture of the heart.

To all, Dr. Stroud's treatise must be interesting, not as raising or gratifying curiosity, but as an intelligent explanation of the incidents themselves, and, still more, as a new illustration of the awful agony which our Redeemer must have suffered. I was indebted to you for first bringing Dr. Stroud's book under my notice, and I have since repeatedly recommended it to the notice of my medical friends and students. I find lately that the first edition is now exhausted, and hope that it will not be long before a new edition of so valuable a work makes its appearance.

Believe me, with much respect, yours very sincerely,

JOHN STRUTHERS.

3 Park Place, Edinburgh,
May 1, 1862.

THE FORTY DAYS

AFTER

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

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PREFACE.

I HAVE long had the conviction that the results of that fuller and more exact interpretation of the books of the New Testament to which biblical scholars have been conducted, might be made available for framing such a continuous and expanded narrative of the leading incidents in our Redeemer's life as would be profitable for practical and devotional, rather than for doctrinal or controversial purposes. It was chiefly to try whether I could succeed in realizing the conception I had formed of what such a narrative might be made, that the volume on the *Last Day of Our Lord's Passion* was published. The favourable reception which it met has induced me to issue a companion volume on the succeeding and closing period of our Lord's life on earth. Should this meet with anything like equal favour, I will be encouraged to prosecute

the task of completing the narrative in a similar form.

To one who previously had doubts of the historic truth of the entire Gospel narrative, a personal inspection of the localities in which the events are represented as having occurred, must have a peculiar interest and value. It was in such a state of mind, half inclined to believe that the whole story of the Gospel was legendary, that M. Renan visited the Holy Land three years ago. He has told us the result. "All that history," he says, "which at a distance seemed to float in the clouds of an unreal world took instantly a body, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking accord between the texts and the places, the marvellous harmony of the evangelical picture with the country which served as its frame, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, mutilated but still legible, and ever afterwards in the recitals of Matthew and Mark, instead of an abstract Being that one would say had never existed, I saw a won-

derful human figure live and move." In listening to this striking testimony as to the effect of his visit to the East, we have deeply to regret that with M. Renan the movement from incredulity towards belief stopped at its first stage.

Besides its use in cases like that of Renan, in removing pre-existing doubts, a journey through Palestine is of the greatest service in giving a certain freshness and vividness to one's conceptions of the incidents described by the Evangelists, which nothing else can impart. Its benefits in this respect it would be difficult to exaggerate. But if any one go to the Holy Land full of the expectation of gazing on spots, or limited localities, once hallowed by the Redeemer's presence, and closely linked with some great event in his history; or if he go, cherishing the idea, that a study of the topography will throw fresh light upon some of the obscurer portions of the Gospel record, he will be doomed, I apprehend, to disappointment. I had the strongest possible desire to plant my foot

upon some portion of the soil of Palestine, on which I could be sure that Jesus once had stood. I searched diligently for such a place, but it was not to be found. Walking to and fro, between Jerusalem and Bethany, you have the feeling—one that no other walks in the world can raise—that He often traversed one or other of the roads leading out to the village. But when you ask where, along any one of them, is a spot of which you can be certain that Jesus once stood there, you cannot find it. The nearest approach you can make to the identification of any such spot, is at the point where the lower road curves round the shoulder of Mount Olivet, the point from which the first view of Jerusalem would be got by one entering the city by this route. It is here that Dr. Stanley supposes Jesus to have paused and beheld the city, and to have wept over it. There is every likelihood that his supposition is correct; and it was with his description fresh in the memory, that more than once I visited the memorable spot. I found,

however, that the best topographer of Jeru salem and its neighbourhood, whom I had the fortune to meet there—one who had studied the subject for years—was strongly inclined to the belief that it was along the higher and not the lower road that the triumphal procession passed; and that it was on his reaching the summit of Mount Olivet, that the city burst upon the Saviour's view. It did not alter my own conviction that Dr. Stanley was correct; but it hindered, indeed destroyed, the impression which absolute certainty would have produced.

There is, indeed, one circle of limited diameter, I believe but one, that you can trace on the soil of Palestine, and be absolutely certain that Jesus once stood within its circumference — that which you may draw round Jacob's Well near Sychar. I had determined to tread that circle round and round; to sit here and there and everywhere about, so as to gratify a long-cherished wish. How bitter the disappointment on reaching it to find no open space at the well-mouth

but, spread all round, the remains of an old building, over whose ruinous walls we had to scramble and slide down, through heaps of stones and rubbish, till through two or three small apertures we looked down into the undiscoverable well!

It would seem indeed that, Jacob's Well excepted, there is not a definite locality in Palestine that you can certainly and intimately connect with the presence of Jesus Christ. The grotto shown at Bethlehem may have been the stable of the village inn, but who can now assure us of the fact? It is impossible to determine the site of that house in Nazareth under whose roof, for thirty years, Jesus lived. Of Capernaum, the city in which most of his wonderful works were wrought, scarcely a vestige remains. Travelers and scholars are disputing which is Capernaum among various obscure heaps of ruins on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. No one, I believe, can tell the exact place where any one of our Lord's miracles was wrought, or any one of

his parables was spoken. The topographical obscurity that hangs around the history of Jesus, reaches its climax at Jerusalem. Bethany is sure, but the house of Lazarus is a fable. The Mount of Olives remains, but it cannot have been where they show it, so near the city, that the real Gethsemane lay. You cannot err as to the ridge on which of old the Temple stood, but where were the courts around it, in which Jesus so often taught; where the palace of the High Priest, the hall of Pilate, the ground on which the cross stood, the new sepulchre in which they laid his body? Whenever you try to get at some fixed and limited locality, it eludes your search. All is obscurity; either utterly unknown, or covered with a thickening cloud of controversy. May it not have been meant that the natural, but in this case too human curiosity that we cherish, should be baffled? Is it not better that he should have passed away, leaving so little of minute local association connected with his presence in the midst of us? Does it not seem more in ac-

cordance with the dignity of his divine character, that of all the lives that were ever lived on earth, his should be the one that it is least possible to degrade by rude familiarities of conception; his the name which it is least possible to mix up with that superstition which ever seeks an earthly shrine at which to offer its incense?

It is true that tradition has fixed on many holy places in Palestine, and that each year sends crowds of worshippers to these shrines; but as the darkness of those ages in which these traditions arose is giving place to light, the faith of many in these holy places cannot stand against the gathering force of evidence. The time must come, however long it be of arriving, when what is doubtful and what is sure shall be clearly known; and if then, still more than now, it shall appear that the most wonderful of all earthly lives has left the fewest visible marks of itself behind in recognisable localities, it will also, perhaps, be believed that this is so, not without a purpose, but that it should be manifest that

the ties of Jesus of Nazareth were not with places, but with persons; the story of his life one easily and equally understood in all ages and in every land.

It was while the sheets of this volume were passing through the press, that the *Vie de Jesus* came into the writer's hands. I need not say with what lively interest I turned to that part of it in which the period of our Saviour's life, of which this volume treats, should have been represented. I found an utter blank. "For the historian," says M. Renan, "the life of Jesus terminates with his last breath. It would, perhaps, scarcely be fair to call this a verdict against evidence, as M. Renan has told us that in a future volume he will explain to us how the legend of the resurrection arose. We must be permitted, however, even in absence of such explanation, to express our strong conviction of the unreasonableness of that procedure which assumes that what are good and sufficient materials for history up to the death of Jesus, are utterly useless afterwards.

Admitting for the moment that the resurrection, as a miraculous event, did not and could not happen, the seeing and conversing with Jesus was surely a thing as much with in the power of human testimony to establish at one time as at another. And if those witnesses are to be credited, as M. Renan admits they are, who tells us of seeing and hearing him before the crucifixion, why are the same witnesses to be discredited when they tell us of seeing and hearing him after that event? If the mixture of miracle with recorded incident throws the later period out of the historian's pale, should it not have done the same with the earlier period also?

This, however, is not the place to enter upon any of those momentous topics which M. Renan has brought up afresh for discussion. There are different modes in which his *Life of Jesus* may be met and answered. One is a full and critical exposure of all the arbitrary assumptions and denials, affirmations without proof, doubts without reasons, inconsistencies and contradictions, errors his-

torical and exegetical, which are to be met with throughout the volume. Renan's own range of scholarship is so extensive, and he has derived his materials from so many resources, that we trust no incompetent hand will rashly undertake the critical dissection of his book. A simpler, more direct, and more effective method of dealing with this work, would be to expose its flagrant failure in what may be regarded as its capital design and object; to eliminate all that is superhuman and divine from the character and life of Christ, and yet leave him a man of such pure, exalted, unrivalled virtue, as to be worthy of the unreserved and unbounded love and reverence of mankind. Let the fancy sketch of Jesus of Nazareth, which M. Renan has presented to us, be stripped of that rich coloring which he has thrown around it, and it will appear as that of a man who at times showed himself to be ignorant, weak, prejudiced, extravagant, fanatical; who in his teaching advanced sometimes what was foolish, sometimes what was

positively immoral; who in his practice was often himself misled, and became at least an accomplice in misleading and deceiving others; it is such a man whom he holds forth to us, and would have us venerate as the author of the Christian faith. Here in this latest assault upon the Divinity of Christ, we have it set before us what kind of human character is left to Him if his Sonship to God be denied. It is a singular result of this attempt to strip Christ of all Divine qualities and perfections, that it mars and mutilates his character even as a man. The two elements—the human, the Divine—are so inseparably interwoven, that you cannot take away the one and leave the other unimpaired. If Jesus be not one with the Father in the possession of Divine attributes, he can no longer be regarded as the type and model of a perfect humanity. A curious inquiry thus suggests itself into the modifications to which the humanity was subjected by its alliance with Divinity in the complex character of the Redeemer, and into the man-

ner in which the natural and the supernatural were woven together in his earthly history.

But without any controversial treatment, the evil which M. Renan's work is fitted to produce may be neutralized — by a simple recital of the Life of Jesus, so as to show that the blending of the natural with the miraculous, the human with the Divine, is essential to the coherence and consistency of the record; absolutely precluding such a conception of Christ's character as that which M. Renan has presented; that the fabric of the Gospel history is so constructed that if you take out of it the Divinity of Jesus, the whole edifice falls into ruins. The writer ventures to hope that such a Life of Jesus as he meditates may at least partially serve this purpose, and be useful in promoting an intelligent and devout faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind.

W. HANNA.

EDINBURGH, 11*th Nov.*, 1863.

I

The Resurrection.

We left Mary Magdalene and the other Mary keeping their lonely watch over against the sepulchre till the sun of Friday sets. At its setting, Saturday, the great Sabbath of the Passover, begins. Such a Sabbath nev er dawned upon this world before or since. All things wear an outward look of quiet in Jerusalem. A great calm, a deeper than Sabbath stillness, has followed the stir and excitement of those strange scenes at Golgotha. Crowds of silent worshippers fill, as usual, the courts of the Temple; and all goes on, at the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice, as it had done for hundreds of years gone by. But can those priests, who minister within the Holy Place, gaze without some strange misgivings upon the rent in the veil from top to bottom, which

* Matt. xxvii. 62-66: xxviii. 1-6.

yesterday they had seen so strangely made, and which they scarce had time imperfectly to repair? Can they think without dismay of that rude uncovering of all the hidden mysteries of the most Holy Place, which they had witnessed? Among the crowds of worshippers without, there are friends and followers of Jesus. They would have been here, had nothing happened to their Master the day before, and they are here now, for, by keeping away, they might draw suspicion upon themselves; but what heart have they for the services of the Sanctuary? They have just had all their brightest earthly hopes smitten to the dust; and so prostrate are they beneath the stroke, that they cannot even recall to memory, that but a few months before, Jesus had, more than once, distinctly told them that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. No writer of a fictitious story, no framer of a religious myth, had he previously put into Christ's

lips such distinct foretellings of his death and resurrection, would have attributed to his followers such an entire forgetfulness of these predictions, such an utter prostration of all faith and hope, as that which the Evangelists describe as coming upon all our Lord's disciples immediately after his death, lasting till the most extraordinary means were taken to remove them, and yielding slowly even then. Yet, after all, is it not true to human nature, that upon the minds and hearts of those simple, rude, uncultivated men and women, filled as they had been with other and quite different expectations, the shock of such a shameful death, coming in such a way upon their Master, was so sudden and so stunning, that all power of forming a new conception of their Master's character, and taking up a new faith in him, was gone; the power even of remembering what he had said about himself beforehand for the season paralysed?

But love lives on, even where faith dies out, among those disconsolate and utterly

hopeless friends and followers of our Lord. While the two Marys had remained throughout the preceding day before the sepulchre, others of those Galilean women had hastened to occupy the short space between the burial and the sunset, in beginning their preparations for the embalming of their Master's body. And these, with the two Marys, are waiting now, not without impatience; for their hearts, not in the Temple services, have gone where they have seen him laid,—till the sunset, the close of the Sabbath, enables them to have all the needed wrappings, and spices, and ointments prepared, so that when the third morning dawns they may go out to Golgotha, to finish there at leisure what Joseph and Nicodemus had more hurriedly and imperfectly attempted, before they laid Jesus in the sepulchre.

But how, throughout this intervening Sabbath, fares it with the chief priests and rulers? Are they quite at ease; content and happy; satisfied with, if not glorying in, their success? They have got rid of this

obnoxious man; he is dead and buried. What fear can there be of him now? What risk or danger to them, or to their supremacy, can come out of his grave? May they not bury all their apprehensions in that closed sepulchre? No; a ghastly fear comes in to mar the joy of a gratified revenge. They dread that dead man still; he rules their spirits from his sepulchre. They would not cross Herod's threshold the day before, lest they should be defiled. They could not bear the thought that Jesus should hang suspended on the cross throughout the Sabbath-day; it would disturb, it would desecrate the services of the Holy day, the Holy Place. But they scruple not to desecrate the Sabbath by their jealous fears; by their secret councils; by their plannings to prevent a future, dreaded danger. And so, no sooner is the Sabbath over, than they hasten to the Governor, saying to him:—"Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." They had themselves heard him, at

the very beginning of his ministry, say publicly: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." They had heard him at a later period say: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Was it to these vague and general sayings of our Lord that the Rulers now referred? It is more likely that they had in view some of those more recent and more explicit declarations of Jesus to his own disciples, such as the one already quoted, or such as that other, and still more explicit one, when he took his disciples apart by the way, as they were going up to Jerusalem, and said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to

mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." What more natural than that the betrayer himself, to whose act especial allusion was thus made, should, in some of his communications with the Rulers, have repeated to them those memorable words? They now remember, while the disciples themselves forget. They fear, while the disciples have ceased to hope. When first reported to them, they had mocked at the unmeaning words; but now that so much of the prophecy has been accomplished, they begin to dread lest somehow or other the remainder of it should also be fulfilled. As yet all was safe; it was not till the third day that he was to rise again. During that Sabbath-day the body of the Crucified was secure enough in the sepulchre; the very sanctity of the day a sufficient guard against any attempt to invade the tomb. But instant means must be taken that thereafter there be no tampering with the place of burial. No night-guard could they get so good as a company of Roman

soldiers whose iron rule of discipline imposed death upon the sentinel who slept at his post. Such guard they could get stationed at the sepulchre only under the Governor's sanction. "Command therefore," they said to Pilate, "that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." Little heeding either the first or the last error, having no sympathy with their idle fears about the rifling of the sepulchre, in no good humour either with himself or with the Rulers, yet, since he had gone so far to please them, not caring to refuse their last request, Pilate complies. "Ye have a watch," he says; "a detachment of my soldiers placed at your disposal during the feast, use it as you please; go your way, and, with its help, make the sepulchre of that poor, innocent Nazarene, you got me to crucify, as sure as you can." And they went their way. They passed a cord across the stone which filled

the entrance into the sepulchre, and fastened it at each end to the adjoining rock with the sealing clay, so that the stone could not be removed and replaced, however carefully, in its first position, without leaving behind a mark of the disturbance. And they placed the sentinels, with the strict command that they were to suffer no man in the darkness to meddle with that sepulchre; and thus, securely guarded, the dead body of the Redeemer reposes.

The darkness deepens round the sepulchre, the sentinels kindle their night-lamps, and pace to and fro before it. The midnight hour has passed; it is yet dark. The day has but begun to dawn, when those women, whose wakeful love sends them forth on their early errand, leave the Holy City to go out to Calvary to complete there the interrupted embalming. They are already near the spot, when a difficulty, not thought of till then, occurs to them. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? That stone

which they had seen two nights before closely fitted into its place, was too large, too firmly embedded in its place for their weak hands to move, and at this hour, and at that spot, what aid of stronger hands can they obtain? Another difficulty there was; but of it happily they were ignorant, or it might have stopped their movement altogether. Of that stealing of the stone, of that guard planted the preceding day before the sepulchre, they had heard nothing, else they might have put to one another the further question, How, with such guard before it, shall we ever get access to the grave? It is as they are communing with one another by the way, that the earth quakes, and the angel descends from heaven, and rolls the stone back from the door of the sepulchre, and, having done this service for the embalmers, sits down upon it, waiting their approach. Was it then that the great event of that morning took place? Was it as the angel's hand rolled back the stone, and opened the entrance of the tomb, that the Great Redeemer

of mankind awoke, arose, and stepped forth from his temporary rest among the dead? It is not said so. The keepers did not witness the resurrection. They saw the angel, the light of his countenance, the snowy radiance of his raiment, and for fear of him they became as dead men. But they saw not the Lord himself come forth. The angel himself may not have witnessed the resurrection. He did not say he had. He speaks of it as an event already past. It may not have been as a spectator or minister to his Lord, in the act of rising from the dead, that he was sent down from heaven. The Lord of life needed not that service which he came to render. Through that stone door he could have passed as easily as he passed afterwards through other doors which barred not his entrances nor his exits. Altogether secret, the exact time and manner of the event, unnoticed and unknown was that great rising from the dead. The clearest and amplest proof was afterwards given of the fact that, some time between sunset of the last and

sunrise of the first day of the week, the resurrection had taken place; but it pleased not the Lord who then arose to do so under the immediate eye or inspection of any human witness.

Alarmed by the quaking of the ground beneath their feet, bewildered by the strange light which is seen streaming forth from beside the sepulchre, the women enter the garden, approach the sepulchre, gather courage as they see that the stone is already rolled away, but might have sunk again in terror as they looked at him who sat upon that stone, had he not prevented their fears by saying to them, in tones, let us believe, full of soothing power: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified"—'I know the errand that you come on. I know that it is love to the Crucified which brings you, thus early, to what was once his grave; and I have tidings of him that such love as yours will delight to hear. True, all that labour of yours about these spices and ointments is lost; you will find here

no body to embalm. But not lost this visit to the sepulchre; for to you first, among all his followers, have I to tell: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay;"' and he led them into the sepulchre.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay." How little did the angel who first uttered these words, and heard the echo of them die away among the recesses of the rocky garden,—how little, perhaps, did he think that the invitation which he thus gave to those few trembling women who stood before him, would be conveyed down through all after times, and be borne to the ears of millions of the followers of Jesus Christ. And yet it has been even so, and in the course of its long descent and wide circulation, it has reached even unto us. Let us listen to and obey it. Come, let us look at the place where the Lord once lay, and from which on that third morning he arose.

We cannot indeed literally accept the angelic invitation, and go and look into the

empty sepulchre. The hand of time, and in this instance the still rougher hands of the devotee and of the infidel, have wrought such changes in that sacred neighbourhood that the exact site of the holy sepulchre cannot be identified. But though we may not be able to plant our footsteps on the very ground that the trembling women occupied, or follow them as, angel led, they passed into the deserted tomb, yet in thought we may still bend over the place where the Lord once lay.

As we do so, let us reflect upon the proofs of the divine mission of the Redeemer afforded by his resurrection from the grave. Evidence enough had been afforded by our Lord himself, during his lifetime, of his divine character and authority. The words he spake, the works he did, proclaimed him to be the Son of the Highest. But sufficient as it was to convince the candid, that evidence had not been sufficient to silence the cavillers. His words were misunderstood and misinterpreted; his miracles, though not

denied, were attributed to Satanic agency. It was as a blasphemer that he was put to death. But his resurrection appears at least to have had this effect, it stopped the mouths of his adversaries. There might be a few among the more credulous of them who accepted the clumsy tale that the chief priests tried to circulate about his disciples coming by night and taking the body away. But loudly and publicly as, both in the heart of Jerusalem and elsewhere, the apostles proclaimed this fact in the presence of the Rulers themselves, it does not appear that its reality was ever openly challenged, or that any such attempt was made to explain it away as had been made regarding other miracles wrought by the Saviour's hands. If it failed to convince, it succeeded at least in silencing those who would, if they could, have dealt with it in a like manner.

It had indeed the force of a double miracle. Barely, and by itself, the rising of Jesus from the dead most fully authenticated the claims he had put forth. Had the Son of

Mary not been all that he had declared himself to be, never would such an exercise of the Divine power have been put forth on his behalf. But more than this, Christ had publicly perilled his reputation as the Christ of God, on the occurrence of this event. When challenged to give some sign in support of his pretensions, it was to his future resurrection from the dead, and to it alone, that he appealed. Often, as we have seen, and that in terms incapable of misconstruction, had our Lord foretold his resurrection. It carried thus along with it, a triple proof of the divinity of our Lord's mission. It was the fulfilment of a prophecy, as well as the working of a miracle; that miracle wrought, and that prophecy fulfilled, in answer to a solemn and confident appeal made beforehand by Christ to this event as the crowning testimony to his Messiahship.

But not yet have we exhausted the testimony which the resurrection of Jesus embodies. He spoke of that resurrection as the raising of himself by himself. "Destroy

this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. I lay down my life, that I may take it again. I have power to lay it down; I have power to take it again." An assumption by Jesus Christ of a power proper to the Creator alone; a clothing of himself with the high prerogatives of the giver and the restorer of life. His actual resurrection, did it not in the most solemn manner ratify that assumption, convincing us by an instance of the highest kind, that whatsoever the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise?

But further still—and it is this which attaches such importance to this incident in the history of our Redeemer, and causes it to be spoken of in the New Testament Scriptures as standing in such close connexion with all our dearest hopes as to the life beyond the grave,—in the resurrection of the Saviour, the seal of the Divine acceptance and approval was put upon that great work of service and of sacrifice, of atonement and of obedience in our room and stead, which Jesus finished on the cross. The expression

and embodiment of that acceptance and approval in a visible act, an outward and palpable incident, gives an aid and a security to our faith in Christ for our acceptance with God, far beyond that which any bare announcement in words could possibly have conveyed. Can we wonder, then, at the prominence given, in the teachings and writings of the apostles of our Lord, to an event so full of convincing evidence, so rich in spiritual instruction and comfort? To be a witness to this great event was held—as the election of Matthias informs us—to be the special function of the apostolic office. It was this event that Peter referred at large in his discourse to the multitude on the day of Pentecost. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Questioned, a short time afterwards, before the Sanhedrim, as to the earliest of the apostolic miracles, "Be it known," said Peter, "unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from

the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole." When Paul addressed the men of Athens, this was the one supernatural incident to which, in the way of attestation, he referred: "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance, in that he hath raised him from the dead." I have but to refer to the 15th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, to remind you of the place and prominence given to the event by the great apostle of the Gentiles: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."*

From the first, it was to that crowning miracle of Christianity that its teachers made appeal. And now once more, in our own times, it is by that event that we desire that the entire question of the supernaturalism of our religion should be decided; for if that event be true, then any, then all other miracles are at least credible, for where

* See Appendix A.

among them shall a greater than this be found? If that event be true, then upon it does the entire fabric of our Christian faith securely rest; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then are we prepared along with this, and as harmonizing with this, to believe all that the Scriptures have taught us of the glory of Christ's person, as one with, and equal to the Father;—all that they have taught us of the design of his life and death among us, as the Redeemer of our souls from death,—the giver, the infuser, the nourisher, the maturer of that eternal life which is for our souls in him. Let us then be devoutly grateful for it, that our faith in him—in knowledge of whom, in union with whom standeth our eternal life—has such a solid foundation of fact to rest upon,—a foundation so firmly imbedded among all those other foundations upon which our knowledge of the past reposes, that to unsettle, to overturn it, you must unsettle, must overturn them all.

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay,"

that you may contemplate him, the one and only instance which this world hath witnessed of the last enemy, Death, being fairly met,—met in his own territory, triumphed over in his own domain, by the use of his own weapons. That grim, inexorable tyrant, wealth has never bribed, tears have never softened, beauty has never moved as he made his unfaltering approach, and struck his unerring blow. To and fro, wide over the vast field of humanity, has that sheer, cold scythe been ever swaying, and generation after generation has it laid low in the dust. Two only out of the many millions of our race—two in olden time were snatched away before the stroke of the destroyer came upon them, and passed away without tasting death. But the translation of Enoch and Elijah was no victory over death; they never met, they never grappled with this foe; they were withdrawn from the battle-field before the day of conflict came. Some there were, too, in after times who, subject for a season to the dominion of

death, were delivered from his sway; but neither was theirs the victory, for they had to return again, and bow once more beneath the yoke of the great conqueror. The widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus whom Jesus loved, lie low as others in the caverns of the dead. One alone of human form ever grappled with that strong wrestler, Death, and cast him from him overcome. His way to conquest lay through brief submission. Like others, he descended into the dark and dreary prison-house. The grave opened to receive him. He seemed to have passed away, as the multitudes who had gone before. But Death and the Grave never received such a visitant into their silent and vast domains. He approached the throne of the tyrant, to wrench the sceptre of empire from his hand. In bursting, as he did, the barriers of the grave, it was no mere respite that he obtained for himself, but a full and final victory. He bade adieu that morning to the sepulchre for ever. He left no trophy behind; nothing of his in the

hands of death; nothing but that empty sepulchre to tell that he had once, and for a short season, been under the hold of the destroyer. Even had this been a solitary conquest, though the sepulchre of Jesus were to remain for ever as the only one from which the tenant came forth alive, to return to it no more,—still would we draw near to muse upon this one triumph of humanity over the last enemy.

But we have all a nearer, a more special interest in this deserted tomb of Jesus Christ. His was no solitary, isolated victory over the grave. For us he died, and for us he rose again. Firm and fast as the grave now seems to hold the buried generations of our race, it is now doomed, as a fruit of Christ's resurrection, to relax its grasp, and yield them up again. Empty as was Joseph's sepulchre when the angel stood before it and invited the women to enter, so empty shall one day be every grave of earth, when another angel shall sound his trumpet, and it shall ring through all the regions of the dead, and stir

all to life again. Blessed was that morning which dawned upon the empty tomb at Calvary, but more blessed to us shall that other morning be, which shall dawn upon all the emptied graves of earth, if only now we live in Christ; if at death we sleep in Jesus; if at that resurrection we be numbered with those who shall share the resurrection of the just.

II.

Appearance to Mary Magdalene.*

In relating the incidents of the resurrection, St. Matthew tells us that it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who, as the first day of the week began to dawn, went out to the sepulchre. St. Mark mentions Salome as having accompanied them. St. Luke introduces the additional name of Joanna. St. John speaks of Mary Magdalene, and of her only. On the supposition that a number of those women who came with Jesus from Galilee had agreed to complete as early as possible the embalming of his body, and that they had either started together from the city, or, being in different parts of it the night before, had fixed to meet at early dawn at the sepulchre, we can readily enough understand that each of the four independent narrators might name one

* John xx. 1-18.

or more of them without specifying the others. Looking, however, a little more closely into the four separate accounts, we notice that, according to Matthew, the women on their arrival found the stone removed from the entrance of the sepulchre, and an angel sitting upon it, who invited them to enter and look at the place where the Lord had lain. Mark, making no allusion to any vision of an angel without, says that they passed into the sepulchre, and, on entering, saw "a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a long white garment," who addressed to them nearly the same words which Matthew puts into the mouth of the angel seen sitting upon the stone. Luke tells us that, finding the stone rolled away, they entered in and found the sepulchre empty, and as they stood perplexed at the discovery, "behold, two men stood by them in shining garments," and spoke to them in terms and in a tone differing considerably from that attributed to the single angel by the first two evangelists. It appears again, from the nar

rative of John, that Mary Magdalene had seen no angel, had heard at least no announcement that the Lord was actually alive, when she hurried off from the sepulchre in search of Peter and John. What are we to make of these discrepancies? Was it sometimes one and sometimes two angels that appeared; were some eyes opened and some eyes shut to the angelic visions? Was it one visit, or two, or more, by the same or different groups of women, which were paid to the sepulchre? Various attempts to answer such questions have been made; various suppositions have been framed, the adoption of which, it has been thought, would relieve the different accounts from conflicting with one another; various modes of interlacing them, so as to form out of them a continuous and consistent narrative, have been presented. If it cannot be said that they have all absolutely failed, it must be said that not one of them is entirely satisfactory. We cannot doubt that if all the minor and connecting links were in our hands, we should

be able to explain what now seems to be obscure, to harmonize what now seems to be conflicting; but in the absence of such knowledge, we must be content to take what each writer tells us, and regard it as the broken fragment of a whole, all the parts of which are not in our hands, so that we can put them connectedly together. But is not this fragmentary character of each of these four separate accounts just what we might have expected, considering the time and manner of the events narrated,—the obscure light, the women coming, it may have been singly, or in different groups by different routes, the surprise, the terror, the running in and out, to and from the city—all this within the compass of an hour or two? Which one of the spectators or actors in these busy and broken movements, if asked afterwards to detail what occurred, but might have given an account of it differing from that of all the others? And if any two of these independent sources of information were applied to or made use of, how readily might apparent

contradictions emerge upon the face of the narratives that were afterwards preserved. We do not know from what particular sources Matthew, Mark, and Luke derived their information. This special interest, however, attaches to the narrative of John,—it is partly that of an eye-witness, and partly drawn, we cannot doubt, from what was told him by Mary Magdalene herself. Overlooking the part taken by all the other women, John confines himself exclusively to her. Even as our Lord himself singled her out from among the women who had ministered to him, to make to her his first appearance after his resurrection, so does the beloved disciple speak of her alone while he details to us the incidents of that wonderful manifestation.

We feel as if a great injustice had been done to Mary Magdalene, in identifying her with the woman who was a sinner, who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. The name of that woman is not mentioned

in the record of the incident in which she took so prominent a part. The incident occurred not in Magdala but at Nain. It was after Christ had left Nain that the first mention of this Mary meets us in the gospel narrative: "And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered unto him of their substance." Named thus along with one whose husband held an important office in Herod's household, named as one of those who ministered to our Lord of their substance, Mary Magdalene does not appear to have been a woman of a low or poor condition. Neither have we any right to ground upon the fact that seven devils had been cast out of her, the conclusion that she had

been a woman of depraved or dissolute habits. Satanic possession carried then no more evidence along with it of previous immorality, than insanity would do now among ourselves.

But whoever, whatever this Mary was, she was, as we have already seen, one of the latest at the sepulchre on the evening of the burial, and now she is one of the earliest at that sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection. Perhaps, more eager than the rest, she had hurried on before, and entered the garden alone. A quick glance, that waited not to catch even the sight of the angel's form, had shown her that the entrance was open, and the sepulchre empty. Overwhelmed with sorrow at the sight; waiting not to hear the angel's intimation that He had risen; leaping at once to the conclusion that hostile hands had rifled the sacred tomb, her troubled fancy picturing to her the indignities to which that form, beloved even in its lifelessness, might have been subjected,—Mary hurries back to the city

She seeks the house to which John had carried the mother of our Lord. She finds there both John and that other apostle, whom a strange attraction has drawn now to John's side. She has but breath enough to say, "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him." Her eagerness of alarm passes, by sympathy, into the hearts of the two apostles. They arise to run out together to the sepulchre. John's lighter footstep, quickened by his more ardent, more unburdened love, carries him soonest to the spot; but, at the entrance, his deep and reverential spirit holds him back in awe. He stops, and bends, and looks into the grave. Peter, of slower step, and still labouring, it may have been, under the burden of self-reproach, is behind John in the race; but, bolder or more impetuous, he stops not at the door, but, passing John, goes at once into the sepulchre. He draws his brother apostle after him, the one never dreaming of the influence he thus exerts, the other as little thinking of the in-

fluence he obeys. Both are now within, and have leisure to look round upon the place. There the linen clothes are lying, with which Joseph and Nicodemus had swathed the body, and there, not loosely flung upon them in a disordered heap, but carefully folded up in a place by itself, lies that napkin which Mary herself may have helped to bind around the thorn-marked brow. Who had arranged them thus? Was it the hand of the great Sleeper himself, on his awakening within the tomb? or was it some angel's hand that took the death garments, as they dropped from around the risen one, and thus disposed them? Whoever did it, there had been no haste; all had been done calmly, collectedly. Neither earthly friends nor earthly foes had done it: the one would not have stripped the garments from the body; the other would have been at no pains so carefully to arrange and deposit them. Peter, as he looks, is amazed, but his amazement shapes itself into no connected thought; he departs wondering

in himself at that which had come to pass. John's quieter and deeper reflection suggests at once the idea that what has taken place is not a removal, but a reanimation of the body. An incipient faith in the resurrection forms within his breast; a faith grounded, not as it might have been, and should have been, on what he had already read or heard—for as yet neither he nor any of the apostles knew from the Scripture, nor believed from Christ's own word, that he must rise again from the dead,—but grounded simply on what he saw, and especially upon the singular condition which the interior of the sepulchre displayed. That rising faith, John kept to himself; he never boasted that he was the first of all the Twelve to believe in the resurrection. Perhaps, his first public mention of the fact was when, so many years afterwards, he sat down to write that Gospel which bears his name.

The brief inspection of the empty sepulchre over—there being nothing more to see or learn—John and Peter return silent and sad to

their own home. Mary Magdalene had followed them, as best she could, in the running out to the sepulchre; but she does not join them in their return. Two evenings before (when all but she and the other Mary had left the tomb into which she had seen the body borne for burial), she had clung to it to the last, and this morning she clings to it still. The Master whom she had lost, had rendered her the greatest of services; had been to her the kindest and best of friends. Her grateful love had clung to him while living; and now this love, living in her sorrow, makes her cling, even when John has left it, to the spot where in death he had reposed. Mary Magdalene, standing alone weeping thus before the empty sepulchre, presents herself to our eye as the saddest and most inconsolable of all the mourners for the Crucified. As she weeps, she stoops to take another look into the deserted place. She sees a sight that might well have diverted her from her grief—two angels sitting, the one at the head, the other at the

feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They say to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Did you ever read of a more absorbing grief than that she, who was addressed thus by angels, should have no surprise, no astonishment to spare; but, as if unheeding who they were that spoke to her, should, out of the depths of her engrossing sorrow, only be able to repeat what she had said to Peter and John, varying the phrase a little—claiming a closer property in the departed—"Because they have taken away *my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid him." And she turns away, even from an interview with angels, from converse with those who may have had as their purpose in putting to her that question, to tell her about her risen Lord. She turns away even from them, to weep out, without further interruption, her most bitter grief.

But now, from other lips, the same question, "Woman, why weepest thou?" salutes her ear. She sees, but scarcely notices, the person who thus speaks to her. He is not

directly before her, and she cares not to turn, or make any minute scrutiny of his person. Even had she done so, seeing him through the veil of dropping tears, she might have failed to recognize him. She cares as little, in fact, about who this speaker is, as she had cared about who those angels were. Taking him to be one who did not need to be told why she wept, who must know all about what had happened—the gardener of the place—she says to him in the simplest, most artless way, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She is willing even to believe that it was with no unkindly purpose he had been removed. Only let her know where he is; and, all forgetful how unfit her weak hands were for such a task, she says,—I will take him away. 'If it be an offence that he lies here in this rich man's tomb, so near the holy city, I will bear him away to some remoter burial-place, where he may lie in peace, and where I may go and weep at will over his grave.'

Jesus saith unto her, "*Mary.*" The old familiar voice! It can be only He who names her so. Instantly—fully—the revelation of his living presence bursts upon her. She turns, and forgetting all about the new strange circumstances in which she sees him, as if the former days of their familiar intercourse had returned,—she says, "Rabboni!" and is about to clasp him to her arms. Jesus stops the movement. "Touch me not," he says, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." This check upon the ardour of Mary's affectionate approach in the first moments of recognition, we can only understand by reflecting upon the object of our Lord's sojourn upon the earth for the forty days after his resurrection.

There is a mystery which hangs around this singular period in the life of our Redeemer. Why did he tarry so long upon the earth, when his work appeared to have been fin-

ished? What peculiar service did that keeping empty so long his seat at his Father's right hand render to his church and people? During the first eight days, on the first and last of which alone he showed himself in Jerusalem; was he treading unseen the streets of the holy city, or haunting the household of the loved family of Bethany? Their midnight hours; did they see him once again amid the dark shadows of Gethsemane, praying now, not that the cup might be taken from him, but that the fruits of his bygone passion might be gathered in? The Sabbaths of these days; did they see him entering again the Temple, passing behind the rent veil into the Holy of Holies, quenching with his unseen hand, and that for ever, the fire that had burned above the mercy-seat? During the weeks which followed, was he wandering an unseen spectator over the scenes of his earthly ministry; revisiting Nazareth, re-entering Capernaum, where most of his mighty works had been done, looking in with kindly eye upon that

nobleman's family, all of whom had believed in him; going out to Cana, casting a passing glance at the dwelling in which the first of his miracles had been performed; lingering for a moment by the gate of the little city of Nain, blessing once more, as he passed, the widow and her recovered child?

It is an idle task, perhaps, for fancy to picture where or how those forty days were spent. But it is not an unprofitable question for us to put to ourselves, what ends could his lingering so long on earth have served? It cannot be supposed that the mere object of affording proof enough that he was still alive, would have detained him here so long. That could have been done in two days as well as forty. Besides, had that been the main object of his delay, why did he not appear oftener in a more open and public manner than he did? Neither can it be imagined, that it was for the purpose of continued and enlarged intercourse with his disciples. The fewness and shortness of the interviews with them preclude

that belief. He was seen by them but ten times in all;* five of those appearances occurring on the day of his resurrection; and four of them, those to Mary, to Peter, to James, to the two disciples, having more of a private than of a public character. Out of the forty days there were but six on which he held intercourse with any human being, and in those six days he did not give more than as many hours to fellowship with those to whom he showed himself. How brief, too, generally, and abrupt the meetings that made up the hours which were so employed! In the twilight of the garden; in the dim-lighted upper chamber; in the grey dawn of the lake side, he appears, speaks but a few sentences, and vanishes as mysteriously as he had appeared. All betokens a studied effort to stand aloof, to shun all close, prolonged, familiar intercourse. What impression was all this studied distance and reserve fitted to make upon the minds of his disciples? Put your-

* See Appendix B.

selves into their exact position at this time; remember that not one of them before his death had risen to any thought or belief in his divinity; that from all their earlier earthly notions of him they had to be weaned; that after days and years of the easiest companionship with him, they had to be raised to the belief that it was the very Lord of heaven and earth with whom they had been holding converse; yet, that belief was to be so formed within them, as not to militate against the idea of his true and proper humanity. See, then, what an important part in the execution of this needful, but most difficult task, must have been fulfilled by his mode of dealing with them during the forty days.

For, let us only conceive what should have happened, if one or other of the two alternatives had been realized; if at once, after a few interviews, sufficient simply to do away with all doubt as to his resurrection, Jesus had passed up into the heavens, never to be seen again on earth; let us imagine

that the descent of the Spirit had immediately thereon ensued; that the day of Pentecost had followed immediately on the day of the resurrection; that the eyes of the apostles had thus at once and fully been enlightened, and the great truth of their Master's Godhead had been flashed upon their minds; the danger undoubtedly would have been that, seen in the blaze of that new glory, shining thus around his person, the man Christ Jesus had been lost, the humanity swallowed up in the divinity; nor would it have been so easy to persuade those men that, ascended up on high, seated at the right hand of the Father, he was the same Jesus still—a brother to them as truly as when he lived among them, equally alive to all human sympathies as when he walked with them by the way, or sat down with them in the upper chamber.

Take, again, the other alternative; that after his resurrection, Christ had immediately resumed and continued—even let us say for no longer a time than these forty

days—the exact kind of life that he had led before, returning to all his old haunts and occupations; spending a day or two with Lazarus and his sister at Bethany; travelling up through Samaria, and sitting wearied by the well's mouth, as before; living in Peter's wife's sister's house, dining with Pharisees; crossing the Lake in the fishing-boat; companying with multitudes on mountain-sides; living and acting outwardly in every respect as he had done before—would not such a return on his part to all the old familiarities of his former intercourse, have had a tendency to check the rising faith in his divinity; to tie his disciples down again to a knowing of him only after the flesh; to give to the humanity of the Lord such bulk and prominence as to make it in their eyes over shadow the divinity? Can you conceive a treatment more nicely fitted to the spiritual condition, to the spiritual wants of those men at that time, than the very one which the Lord adopted and carried out—so well fitted as it was, gradually, gently, without

violence (as is ever the mode of his acting in all the provinces of his spiritual empire), to lead those disciples on from their first misty, imperfect, unworthy ideas of his person, character, and work, on and up to clearer, purer, loftier conceptions of Him? In what better way could a faith in their Master's divinity have been super-induced upon their former faith in him as a man, a friend, a brother, so that the two might blend together without damage done to either by the union; their knowledge of him as human, not interfering with their trust in him as divine; their faith in him as God, not weakening their attachment to him as man?

With this key in our hand—a key which unlocks much of the mystery of our Lord's conduct throughout those forty days—let us return to Mary in the garden. She sees Jesus alive once more before her. She hears him as of old call her by her name. He is hers, she thinks again; hers, as he had been before; hers, not to be torn from her again. All the warmth of those former days of

familiar friendship filling her glad heart, she offers him not the homage of a higher worship; but, addressing him as he did her, "Rabboni," she says—my own, my old, my well-loved Master! She makes some gesture as of embracing him. Gently, but firmly, our Lord repels the too warm, too human, too familiar approach. "Touch me not, Mary." 'You think of me as given back to be to you the same exactly that I was before. You are mistaken; our relationship is changed; our method of intercourse must be altered; you must learn to think of me, and to act towards me, differently from what you ever did before; I am here, but it is only for a short season; I am on earth, but I am now on the way to my Father; my home is no longer with you and the others here below, it is there with my Father up in heaven; still shall I feel to you, and all the others, as tenderly as I ever felt, not ashamed even to call them still my brethren. Touch me not, then, Mary; stop not to lavish on me an affection that has in it too much of the human,

too little of the divine; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God, and your God; my Father and my God in a sense in which he is not and cannot be yours; but your Father and your God in a sense in which he could not have been yours had I not died and risen, and been on my way now to sit down with Him on the throne of glory in the heavens.'

III.

The Journey to Emmaus.*

It was towards evening; the day was far spent when the two disciples reached Emmaus; yet there was time enough for them, after they had dined, to return by day-light to Jerusalem (a distance of about seven miles, a two or three hours' walk) and to be present at that evening meeting, in the midst of which Jesus was seen by them once more. It must have been between mid-day and sunset that the journey to Emmaus was taken. Of the two travellers, the name of one only has been preserved; that of Cleopas, generally believed to have been a near relation of Christ—the husband of the Virgin Mary's sister. It was not, however, the closeness of the relationship to Jesus which won for him the privilege of that strange conversation by the way. Had nearness of rela-

* Luke xxiv. 13-33.

tionship had anything to do with the matter, there was one surely to whom, above all others, we might have expected that he would appear on the day of his resurrection. Yet neither on that day, nor on any of the forty days he spent on earth thereafter, does Jesus seem to have made any special manifestation of himself to his mother, or indeed to have taken any individual notice of her whatever. Her name does not once occur in the record of this period of our Redeemer's life. It looks as if with that kindly, son-like notice of her from the cross, Jesus had dropped the recognition of the earthly relationship altogether, as one not suitable to be carried into that kingdom to whose throne he was about to ascend.

And as it was nothing in their outward relationship to Jesus, so neither was it anything in the personal character, position, or services of these two men which drew down upon them this great favour from the Lord.

They had occupied no prominent place beside the Saviour in the course of his min

istry. They had exhibited no peculiar strength of attachment to him, or to his cause. Had Peter and James and John been the travellers, it would not have been so remarkable that he should have given them so many of the hours of that first day of his resurrection life; more hours, in fact, than he ever gave to any two disciples besides; nay, so far as we can measure them, more hours than he gave to any other interview of that period,—perhaps as many as were spent in all the other interviews together, for generally they were very brief. What was there in these two men to entitle them to such a distinction? They were not apostles, nor were they of any great note among the seventy. Our Lord's first words to them may perhaps help us to understand why it was that he joined himself to them. He had been seen walking beside them, so close as to overhear somewhat of their conversation. But they are so intent upon the topic that engrosses them, that they notice not that a stranger has overtaken them, and

been in part a listener to their discourse. At last, in manner the easiest and most natural, least calculated to give offence, expressive at once of interest and sympathy, Jesus breaks in upon their discourse with the inquiry, "What manner of communications are these that ye have to one another, as ye walk and are sad?" That sadness, who can tell what power it had in drawing the Man of sorrows to their side? It was to Mary, weeping in her lonely grief; to Peter, drowned in tears of penitence,—that he had already appeared. And now it was to these two disciples in their sorrow that he joins himself: so early did the risen Saviour assume the gracious office of comforting those who mourn, of binding up the broken heart. But in Mary, Peter, and these two disciples, three different varieties of human grief were dealt with. Mary's was the grief of a grateful and affectionate heart, mourning the loss of one beloved; Peter's was the grief of a spirit smitten with the sense of a great offence committed; the grief of the two disci-

ples was that of men disappointed, perplexed, thrown into despondency and unbelief. It is especially noticed that it was while they communed together, and reasoned with one another, that Jesus drew near to them. There was much about which they well might differ and dispute. The yielding of their Master to the power of his enemies, and his shameful crucifixion two days before,—how could they reconcile with his undoubted pretensions and power, as a prophet so mighty in words and deeds? This one, that other saying of his, pointing to a future, never now, as they fancied, to be realized, what could they make of them? Had Jesus himself been disappointed, deceived; had he imagined that the people would rise on his behalf, and prevent his crucifixion? That might have been, had he not so often shown that he knew all that was passing in men's hearts. Could he, then, have been ignorant how the multitude of Jerusalem would feel and act? There was truth, too, in what so many of them had

flung reproachfully in his teeth, as he hung upon the cross: He had saved others, why did he not save himself? What a confused heap of difficulties must have risen up before these two men's eyes as they reasoned by the way! And then besides, there was what they had just heard before they left the city,—the report of some women that they had gone out, and found the sepulchre empty, and had seen angels, who told them that he was alive. They, indeed, might easily have been deceived; but Peter and John had also gone out. It is true they had seen no angels, nor had any one, that they had heard of, seen the Lord himself. But the sepulchre had been found empty. The women were right so far; were they right also in what they said about the angel's message? Could Jesus actually be alive again? We wonder that these two men could have left the city at the time they did; we wonder at this perhaps the more because we know that, had they but waited an hour or two longer, they would

have had all their doubts resolved. It is clear enough, however, that neither of them had any faith in the resurrection; and as clear that they were dissatisfied with their unbelief—altogether puzzled and perplexed. Ignorant, they needed to be taught; deeply prejudiced, they needed to have their prejudices removed. For hours and hours, for days and days, they might have remained together without clearing up the difficulties that beset them. But now, in pity and in love, the great Enlightener himself appears —appears in the garb of a stranger who joins them by the way. They do not at first, they do not all through the earnest conversation which follows, recognise him.

In reading the accounts of all the different appearances of Christ after his resurrection, the conviction seems forced upon us, that some alteration had taken place in the aspect of our Saviour, enough to create a momentary hesitation in recognising him, yet not enough after a close inspection, to leave any doubt as to his identity. In the

garden, Mary Magdalene was so absorbed in her sorrow, so utterly unprepared to meet the living Master—she looked so indirectly, with such a heedless glance at the stranger, whom she took to be the gardener—that we do not wonder at her failing to see at first who he was. So soon, however, as her name was uttered, and she turned and fixed that steadier look upon the speaker, the recognition was complete. To the women by the way, to whom next he showed himself, his very salutation revealed him, and left them no room for doubting that it was he. They held him by the feet, too, for a moment or two, as they worshipped, and got the evidence of touch as well as sight to assure them of his bodily presence. That evening, in the upper chamber, the disciples were assembled. They could not be taken by surprise. They were prepared by the reports of Mary Magdalene, of the women, of Peter, of the two disciples from Emmaus, to believe that he was alive; yet when Jesus stood in the midst of them, they supposed

that they had seen a spirit; so troubled were they at the sight, so incredulous were they even as they looked at him, that he had to say to them, "Why are ye troubled and why do thoughts arise in your heart? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have;" and still further, to remove all doubt, he asked that some meat should be presented, and he took the piece of broiled fish and the honeycomb, and did eat them in their presence. It may have been the sudden apparition of Christ in the midst of them, while the doors of the chamber remained unopened, which, in part, begot the belief that it was a spirit that stood before them; but that there was something too in the changed appearance of their Master, which helped to sustain that belief, is evident, from what is told us of his next appearance by the lake side of Galilee. John's quick eye and ear recognised him from the boat; but when they had all landed and gathered round him, "None of them,"

it is said, "durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Whence the desire to put such a question, but from a passing shadowy doubt, and whence the doubt but from some change in his appearance? When afterwards, on the mountain which he had appointed, Jesus showed himself to above five hundred brethren at once, they saw him, and worshipped; but some, it is said, doubted,—those, let us believe, who saw him then for the first and only time, and on whom the sight seems to have had the same effect that it had in the first instance on nearly all who witnessed it. It seems to us the best, if not the only way of accounting for this, to suppose that the resurrection body of our Lord had passed through a stage or two in its transition from the natural into the spiritual body; from its condition as nailed upon the cross, to its ethereal-ized and glorified condition as now upon the throne; the flesh and blood which cannot inherit the heavenly kingdom, still there, yet so modified as to be more plastic under

the power of the indwelling spirit, less subject to the material laws and conditions of its earlier being, the corruptible on its way to the incorruptible, the mortal putting on the clothing of immortality. And that strange, half spiritual appearance which the risen Lord presented, may it not have served to further the great end that our Lord had in view throughout the forty days, namely, to wean the minds of his disciples from their earlier, lower, more human conceptions of him, to a true faith in his mingled humanity and divinity?

There was, however, something special, I believe, in this instance of the two disciples travelling to Emmaus. They might not have recognised him, as, clothed perhaps in the garb of an ordinary traveller, he put his first questions to them by the way; but when he assumed the office of their instructor, and, showing such intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, made their hearts burn within them, as he unfolded their new meaning, must they not many a

time have turned on him a very searching look, wondering as they looked, who this strange teacher possibly could be? Yet were two or three hours spent in that close and earnest conversation, without their once suspecting that it was the Lord. How accurately does this accord with the differing statements of Mark and Luke! Mark distinctly tells us that he appeared to them in another, in a strange form,—a form different from that in which they had seen him previously. He appeared to them, as to all the others, somewhat changed in aspect; but had that been all, they would speedily have recovered from their first surprise, and ere many minutes would have identified him. For a reason, however, hereafter to be alluded to, our Lord purposely conccaled himself till his work of instruction was completed, and drew a veil of some kind over their eyes, which hindered their discovery of him by the way.

He comes to them as an entire stranger; such as they might naturally have met upon

the road, and it is as a stranger that throughout he converses with them. "What manner of communications," he says, "are those that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Little need, thought one of them (his own deep interest in them leading him, perhaps, to exaggerate that felt by the general community)—little need of asking such a question. Of what could any two men leaving Jerusalem, only two days after that crucifixion had occurred—of what else than of it, and him the Crucified, could they be talking? "Art thou only," says Cleopas, "a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And the stranger says to him, What things? Thus it is, by questions needless for him on his own account to put, but very useful to them to answer, that Jesus draws out from them that statement, which at once reveals the extent of their ignorance and incredulity, but, at the same time, the amount of their belief, the strength of their attachment to Christ, and the bitterness of

that grief which the disappointment of their expectations regarding him had created. A stranger though this man is to them, they do not hesitate to confess their faith in Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet mighty in words and deeds; obnoxious as they know the now hated sect to be, they do not hesitate to acknowledge themselves openly as disciples of this persecuted and now crucified Nazarene, though the hope they once had, that he should have been the Redeemer of Israel, they must confess themselves to have relinquished. Nay, so far as the kindly and sympathizing inquiry of this stranger won for him a way into their confidence, that, as if he must be interested in all that concerned the discipleship of Jesus, they tell him what certain women of their company, and certain others of themselves, had reported about the sepulchre.

The stranger's end is gained. The wound has been gently probed; its nature and extent revealed; and now the remedy is to be applied. He who had asked to be informed,

takes the place of the instructor; he who had been reproached for his ignorance, reproaches in his turn. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Slow of heart, indeed, and difficult to convince had they been, who, after such explicit declarations of his own beforehand, that he should be delivered up to the Rulers, and suffer many things at their hands, and be crucified, and rise again the third day, had nevertheless remained so obstinate in their incredulity. Truly the rebuke was needed. Yet how faithful are the wounds of a friend; he wounds but to heal; he rebukes the unbelief, but instantly proceeds to remove its grounds, even as he rose from his slumber in the storm-tossed fishing-boat, first to rebuke the disciples for their unbelieving fears, and then to quiet the tempest, which had produced them. The one great, misleading prejudice of the disciples had been their belief that the path of the promised Messiah was only to be one of triumph and of glory. To rectify that error, it was only required that they should be

made to see that the predicted triumph and glory were alone to be reached through the dark avenues of suffering and of death. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Either Christ, then, is not himself to be believed—in which case it were useless to hear and read anything about him —or in those Old Testament Scriptures there are to be seen everywhere prophetic fingers pointing forward to Him. To search those Scriptures, and to find little or nothing there of Christ, little or nothing to show how it behoved him to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, is to handle them after a very different fashion from that in which they were handled by our Lord himself.

It is not likely that these three travellers had a copy of the Old Testament in their hands. It was not by reference to chapter

and verse, that the exposition of the Saviour was conducted; it was by no minute criticism of words and phrases, that the conviction of these wayfaring men was carried. They were familiar generally with the Scriptures. One or two of the leading prophecies about the Messiah, such as that first one of God himself in paradise, as to the seed of the woman and the serpent; such as that of Moses as to the raising up of a prophet like unto himself; such as that of Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and testified beforehand of the sufferings by which that glory should be preceded and entered; such as that of Daniel about the Messiah being cut off, but not for himself—Jesus may have quoted. But not alone from direct and specific prophecies—from the paschal lamb, and the smitten rock, and the serpent of brass, and the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, but from the whole history of the Jewish people—from the entire circle of types and ceremonies and sacrifices, did Jesus draw forth the materials of that wonderful exposition by which, for two

hours or so, he kept those listening men hanging upon his lips. As we think who the expounder in that instance was, and what the materials of his exposition, how natural the expression,—Would that I had heard all these things concerning Christ illustrated by Christ himself! But have we not the substance of that exposition, as much of it as is needful for us to have, preserved in the writings of the New Testament, and may we not be sure that if we believe not them, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead, as Jesus that morning had done, and should teach us even as he taught those two disciples?

There was something indeed peculiarly, sublimely interesting in that two hours' walk and talk of these three men on the way to Emmaus. Had you been on that road that day, had you met those travellers as they journeyed on, beyond the earnestness of their conversation with one another, you would have seen nothing remarkable

about them, nothing to make you turn and look back upon them as they passed. Two of them are men in humble attire, travelling in the humblest fashion, returning to one of the humblest village-homes: and the third, there is nothing about him different in appearance from the other two; nothing to keep them from conversing with him as an equal, one with whom the most unrestrained familiarity might be used. Yet who is He? He who that very morning had burst the barriers of the grave; he in honour of whose exit from the tomb angels from heaven had been despatched to watch at the foot and at the head of the sacred spot, where in death his body had for a time reposed; he who was now upon his way to enter into that glory which he had with the Father before the world was,—Incarnate Deity fresh from the conflicts and the victories of the garden, the cross, the sepulchre. It is literally God walking with men, men walking, though they knew it not, with God. History tells us of earthly sovereigns strip

ping themselves at times of all the tokens and trappings of royalty, for the purpose of mixing on equal terms with the humblest of their people; but history never told, and imagination never pictured, a disguise, an *incognito* like this. But why was this disguise adopted, and, in this instance, so long preserved? Why, instead of doing as he did with the eleven, first manifesting himself, and then opening their understanding to understand the Scriptures, did he keep himself unknown all the time that the work of exposition was going on? May it not have been to obtain such a simple, natural, easy access for the truth into those two men's minds and hearts, as to give it, even when unsupported by the weight of his own personal authority, a firmer and securer hold? Whatever may have been its more special object as regards the two disciples, wonderful indeed was that condescension of our Lord which led him to give so many hours of his first resurrection-day to this humble office. Many a proud scribe in Jerusalem

would have recoiled from it, have deemed it a waste of his precious time, if asked to accompany two such humble men, and spend so much of one of his Sabbaths in instructing them out of the Scriptures. The Divine Redeemer himself thought it not a task too lowly; and by devoting, in his own person, so much of that first Christian Sabbath to it, has he not at once left behind him a pattern of what all true and faithful exposition of the sacred Scriptures ought to be, even the unfolding of the things touching a once crucified, but now exalted Saviour; and has he not dignified, by himself engaging in it, the work of one man's trying, at any time, or in any way, to lead another to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus?

It was with heavy hearts that the two disciples had left Jerusalem; and had all the journey been like the first few paces of it, it had seemed a long way to Emmaus. But they are at the village now, and the road had never appeared so short. Had they imagined they could be there so soon, they

would have lingered on the road. And now this stranger, whose discourse had so beguiled the way, and made their hearts so burn within them, makes as if he would go farther. Emmaus, it would seem, is not his resting-place. But how can they part from him? How may that conversation, which has shed such a fresh light into their understandings, such a new hope into their hearts, be prolonged? They invite, they urge him to remain. He gives, he makes the opportunity for their constraining him to be their guest. He acts as he had done with the two blind beggars; with the disciples in the storm; with the Syrophenician woman. He suffers violence to be used with him; and then, when he has brought out all the strength of desire and affection towards him in the earnest entreaty, he yields to the urgency he had himself excited. The two disciples constrain him, and he goes in apparently to abide with them. They have him now, as they think, with them for the whole evening; and what an evening it shall

be, when, supper over, the conversation of the wayside may be renewed! The humble table is quickly spread. This is the home, it has been thought, of one of the two disciples, and he whose home it is prepares to do the duty of the host. That duty is taken out of his hands. The mysterious stranger takes the bread; he blesses, he breaks, he gives. Who but One could bless and break, and give in such a way as this? The scales fall from the disciples' eyes. 'Tis he, their own lost but now recovered Lord and Master. Let him wait but a moment or two, they shall be clasping him, as Mary would fain have done, to their hearts, or, falling down, as the women did, and worshipping at his feet. Time is not given them. He reveals himself, and disappears. This moment known by them, the next vanishing from their sight.

IV.

The Evening Meeting.*

When they left Jerusalem on the afternoon of the first day of the week, the two disciples had intended to remain that night, perhaps permanently, at Emmaus. The Paschal Sabbath over, they had resolved to return to their village home,—to their old way of living, burying, as best they could, their expectations disappointed. But the conversation by the way, the manifestation in the breaking of bread, that revealed and vanishing presence of their risen Lord, altered the whole current of their thoughts and acts. They could not stay at Emmaus. Late as it was, they instantly arose and returned to Jerusalem. How quickly, how eagerly would they retrace their steps! What manner of communications would those be that they

* Mark xvi. 13, 14; Luke xxiv. 33–49; John xx. 19–23.

would now have with one another; how different from those which Jesus had interrupted; the incredulity turned now into faith, the sadness into joy! The stranger who had made their hearts burn within them, on their way out to the village, he too was traversing at the same time the road they took on their way back to Jerusalem. But he did not join them now; he left them to muse in silence on all they had seen and heard, or to add to each other's wonder, gratitude, and gladness, by talking to one another by the way. Their hearts were now full of the desire to tell to the brethren they had left behind in the city all that had happened. On reaching Jerusalem, they get at once the opportunity they so much desire. A meeting of the apostles, and of as many others as they could conveniently call together, or could entirely trust, had quietly, somewhat stealthily convened;—the first, we may believe, since the Thursday evening meeting in the upper chamber. And where but in that same chamber can we imagine

that this Sunday evening assembly gathered? The doors were closed against intruders, but these two well-known disciples from Emmaus are easily recognised, and at once admitted. In what an agitated, conflicting state of thought and feeling do they find those assembled there! They had all heard the reports of the women and of Mary Magdalene; but they say little or nothing about them; perhaps give them little credit. But there is Peter, whom no one can well distrust, telling all the particulars of his interview, and carrying the conviction of so many, that they are joyfully exclaiming: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." But this is not the general, not at least the universal state of sentiment. The two disciples tell their tale, but it falls on many an incredulous ear. They are as little believed as the women and Mary Magdalene had been. They are trying all they can, by a minute recital of how Jesus had been known of them, to remove the incredulity, when suddenly, silently—coming as a spirit com-

eth, casting no shadow before him (the doors not opening to let him in), no sight nor sound giving token of his approach—Jesus himself is in the midst of them, and his "Peace be unto you," stills at once the conflicting conversation that had been going on. The manner of this appearance may have been wholly miraculous and supernatural, or it may have been partly or wholly due to those new properties with which the resurrection body of the Saviour was endowed. Upon this difficult topic I have already said all it seems needful or perhaps possible to say. We must leave it clothed with the mystery which surrounds it. No mystery, however, hangs round the kindly, condescending manner in which Jesus proceeds to deal with the terror which his sudden appearance had created. He points to his hands, his feet, his side,—to the marks of those wounds that told of his recent death; marks which it pleased him that his resurrection body should still bear; marks which, it would seem from the apocalyptic vision,

were not to be effaced even from that glorified body which he carried to the throne; marks which that form is to wear for ever, the only visible memorials that are to survive of the great decease accomplished at Jerusalem. Jesus asks them to handle him; an invitation which it is difficult to say whether they accepted or not. He shows them his hands and his feet; and while yet they believe not for joy and wonder, he seeks still further to remove their incredulity, by showing them that he has still the power, though no longer the need, of partaking with them of their ordinary food. He eats of the fish and of the honeycomb. Doubt now gives place to conviction, fear to believing joy; a joy so fresh, so full, that it in turn begins to shake the new-born faith. How true to nature all this rapid succession of conflicting sentiments. Now at last, however, that little company of disciples has settled into a condition fitting it to listen, and Jesus returns to the subject that had engrossed the conversation on the way out

to Emmaus; to this larger, more influential audience he unfolds the testimony that Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms—all the three divisions into which the Scriptures of the Old Testament were classified by the Jews—rendered to his Messiahship; dwelling particularly upon the topic most suited to the existing condition of their thoughts, how, in accordance with all that had been beforehand declared and signified, it behoved him, as the Christ, to suffer and then to rise again the third day. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Wherever, therefore, in the writings of any one of these Christ-taught men they refer an important passage of the Old Testament to the Messiah, we may conclude that they had for doing so the direct and authoritative sanction of our Lord's own interpretation.

But his Messiahship, his death, his resurrection, were not matters in which they alone, their nation alone, were interested. Now that the needful work of suffering and

death was over; now that the wonderful exhibition at once of the sacredness of the Divine law, the holiness of the Divine character, the deep unutterable love of God, had been given—now, wide over all the world, were repentance and remission of sin to be proclaimed in his name; and they, the men to whom Jesus was then speaking, were to be the witnesses, the heralds, the preachers of this large and all-embracing gospel of peace on earth, and good-will, on God's part, towards all the children of men: The first and earliest hint this of the nature and the extent of their great commission; a hint which they did not then understand, which they did not understand even under the enlightening and quickening influences of the day of Pentecost. So far their understanding was opened, that they saw clearly now that Christ ought to have suffered these things, and then to enter into his glory; but their understanding was still shut as to that proclamation of God's forgiving mercy and love, which now in the name of Jesus

was to be borne abroad over the whole earth.

But though it was to be left to time, and the after teachings of the Spirit, to lift them out of their narrow conceptions of the Di vine love to man, as if its outgoings were to be limited to the pale of any one community upon earth, still an initial impression of the sacredness of their vocation as his disciples, of the manner in which the duties of that vocation could alone properly be discharged, and of the blessed and enduring results which were to follow in the train of that discharge, might be made upon their minds. And this was the result which Jesus, in the most striking and solemn manner, proceeded now to bring about: the first step taken by him in the gradual and slow-moving process of qualifying them for that mission which they, and all other disciples of the Saviour after them, were to undertake and carry out.

Then said Jesus unto them again, "Peace be unto you!"—His first greeting, in which

the same words had been used, they had been too surprised and affrighted to listen to, or take home. Now that their minds had become more composed, that they had settled down into a tranquil and joyful conviction that it was indeed their risen Lord who was in the midst of them, he repeats the greeting; repeats it that they might not take it—though it was the common salutation phrase he used, as meant merely to be the usual greeting with which Jew met Jew in the ordinary intercourse of life; that they might not take it as a mere expression of good-will, a wish for their welfare; but that they might have their thoughts thrown back upon what, three evenings before, he had said to them: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." He had said so with the cross, with the sepulchre before him. And now the peace having been secured, and sealed by the blood of the cross and the rising from the

sepulchre, with a new emphasis he says to them, 'Peace, my peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, the peace of pardon be unto you; take it as coming to you through me; enter into, and enjoy it as the fruit of my passion, as God's free gift to you in me. Let the quickening, the comforting assurance that God is at peace with you, that you are at peace with God, take possession of your hearts; that, having tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, you may be prepared for executing the high errand on which I am about to send you forth, that of publishing everywhere the gospel of this peace; preaching peace by me to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh;—"For as my Father sent me, even so now send I you." I send you forth in my name, and I will qualify you by my Spirit.' And having said so, he breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"—an outward and expressive symbol of the twofold truth, that dead, motionless, useless for all the common work of this earthly existence, as lay that dust

which the hand of the Creator moulded into human form till he breathed into it the breath of its natural life—so dead, motionless, useless for the work of our Christian calling do we all lie, till the breath of true spiritual life be breathed into us by the Holy Ghost. And as it was from the lips of the risen Saviour that the breath proceeded, which spread out upon the little company at Jerusalem, so is it from the risen, exalted Saviour that the Spirit comes, whose life-giving influences spread over the whole church of the first-born. But specially upon this occasion was the breathing of Jesus upon the disciples, and the gift which accompanied that breathing, meant to indicate that the mission on which Jesus was sending these disciples out—that of being witnesses for him—was one that could alone be discharged by those who, through him, had received more or less of that heavenly gift. It was this impartation of the Spirit, which was to form the one, indispensable qualification for the work; without which it could

not be done. We know, historically, that it was but a very limited measure of this gift which was actually, upon this occasion, bestowed. The Holy Ghost was not yet in his fulness given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The more plentiful effusion of this gift was reserved for the day of Pentecost. That Spirit, who was to convince of sin, and to lead into all truth, began even then, indeed, his gracious work in the minds and hearts of these disciples, by convincing them of their unbelief and hardness of heart, and by opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. This was but an earnest of better things to come—a few sprinkled drops of that fuller baptism wherewith they were afterwards to be baptized; but yet enough to teach that it was by Spirit-taught, Spirit moved men—by men in whose breasts the heaven-kindled fire of the true spiritual life had begun to burn—that the commission Jesus had been giving could alone be executed. And let not those to whom Jesus is now speaking, speaking as the heads and

representatives of the whole body of his true followers upon earth; let them not think, weak as they are, powerless as they appear, that, in going forth to proclaim in his name, to every penitent transgressor, the free, full, instant, gracious pardon of all his sins, they are embarking in an ideal, unreal work—a work of which they shall never know whether they are succeeding in it or not.

'No,' says the Saviour; 'Partake of the peace I now impart, accept the commission I now bestow; go forth in my name; receive ye the Holy Ghost to guide you; announce the news of God to sinners; proclaim the remission of sins, and, verily I say, whosesoever sins ye thus remit, they are remitted; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.' Such I take to be the real spirit and object of these last words of Jesus, as spoken by him to his disciples at this time; words spoken to animate them in their after work by the assurance that they should not labour in vain; that what they should do on earth should be owned and ratified in heaven. It

were to misinterpret the incidents of that evening meeting; it were to mistake the simple, immediate, and precise object which, in using them, our Lord had in view, to explain these words, as if they were intended to clothe the eleven apostles, and after them, their successors or representatives—to clothe any class of officials in the church, exclusively, with a power of remitting and retaining sins. Where is the evidence that, as originally spoken, the words were addressed exclusively to the eleven? There were others present as well as they. "The two disciples," Luke tells us, "found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them." These other members of the infant church, with the two disciples, had the benediction pronounced on them, as well as on the eleven; the instructions were given to them, as well as to the eleven; the breath was breathed on them, as well as on the eleven. Had Jesus meant, when he spake of this remitting and retaining sins, to restrict to the eleven the power and privileges conferred,

should he not by some word or token have made it manifest that such was his desire? At other times he was at pains to single out the twelve, when he had something meant for their eyes and their ears alone. Is it likely that at this time he would have omitted to draw a line between them and the others who were before him, had it been to them that these closing words were exclusively addressed?

But we have another and still stronger reason for not believing in any such restriction. Jesus had once before used words of nearly the same import with those that are now before us, and he had addressed them to the disciples at large: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it

unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The two concluding verses, as well as the preceding context, contain the conclusive evidence, that it was not to any select class or order of his followers that Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 15–20).

We are not in the least disposed to doubt, that while Christ speaks of the remitting and the retaining of sins as pertaining to the Church at large, his words cover the

acts of the Church in her organized capacity, the inflicting and removing of ecclesiastical censures through her office-bearers in the exercise of discipline. Here, however, we have two remarks to make: 1*st*, That it is only so far as these acts are done by spiritual men, seeking and following the guidance of the Spirit, only so far as they are in accordance with Christ's own expressed will, that they are of any avail, or can plead any heavenly ratification; and, 2*dly*, That all the force they carry is nothing more or less than an authoritative and official declaration of what that will of the Lord is. Neither in any man, in any pope or any priest, in any community, or in any ecclesiastical court, lies the absolute, the independent, the arbitrary power to absolve the sinner from his sins. But did not he, we are asked, with whom alone it is acknowledged that that power rests, appoint the eleven as his earthly delegates, and in the commission here given them, convey into their hands as such, that power? Just as little as in two other com-

missions given to two of the old prophets, he handed over to them that power over the kingdoms and nations of the earth which we rightly believe and affirm, resides alone in the hands of the Almighty. "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant" (Jer. i. 9, 10). "It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit" (Ezek. xxxii. 17, 18).

Here, in terms not less distinct than those in which Christ gives his disciples power over the sins of men, to remit or to retain

God gives to the two prophets power over the nations to cast down and to destroy. The true interpretation of the grant or commission is in both cases the same. In the exercise of any power, inherent or delegated, natural or acquired, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were altogether impotent of themselves to overturn a nation; in the exercise of any power, original or conferred, personal or official, the apostles were just as impotent to remove any sinner's guilt. The prophet's function was limited to the denouncing of a doom which it was for the hand of Jehovah alone to execute. The Church's function is as strictly limited to the announcing of a pardon which it is for the grace of the heavenly Forgiver alone to bestow. And if, in executing that simple but most honourable office of proclaiming unto all men that there is remission of sins through the name of Jesus, she teaches that it is alone through her channels—through channels that priestly or ordained and consecrated hands can alone open—the pardon cometh, she trenches

upon the rights and prerogatives of Him whom she represents, and turns that eye upon herself that should be turned alone on him.

But it is the gracious office of the Church, of every individual member thereof, of every distinct community thereof, in the sense here indicated, to absolve the sinner, to assure him of the Divine forgiveness, to help him to believe in that forgiveness. Wherever the gospel of the grace of God is preached, not generally, but pointedly, to an individual man, and he is entreated and encouraged to take hold of peace, to accept of pardon, to trust in the mercy of Jesus, to believe in the forgiving love of God,—then is that office of remitting sins in the name of Jesus undertaken and discharged. Two illustrative instances occur to us: the one public and official, the other private and personal. The first is that of the penitent offender at Corinth, who was in danger of being swallowed up of overmuch sorrow. Assuming that it lay with the Church to extend her

forgiveness to that offender, desiring to do nothing upon his own individual authority, claiming no exclusive power of priestly absolution, Paul invites the Corinthian believers to deal tenderly, forgivingly with that man, and to receive him back into their communion, telling them that he was quite prepared to go along with them in such treatment of the penitent. "Wherefore I beseech you," he says, "that you would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ." The great object was to make the repentant one feel how wide, how generous, how cordial and unreserved was the forgiveness which the Church extended to him, that he might all the more confidingly repose in that other sympathy, that other forgiveness, which, as far as the heavens are above the earth, are above all the sympathy, all the forgiveness of man.

Our other instance belongs to a late pe-

riod in the life of the beloved disciple. It lies beyond the period embraced in the New Testament history, but is well authenticated. When the tyrant who sent John to Patmos was dead, the apostle returned to Ephesus. Engaged in a visitation of the neighbouring churches, he saw in one of them a youth of so attractive an appearance that he specially committed him to the care and guardianship of the bishop, or chief minister of the church. The minister took the youth to his own home, cherished him, educated him, and at length baptized him. As he grew up, however, the care of his guardian relaxed, and he fell into the company of a band of idle and dissolute youths, who plunged together in a career of sin which led to the committal of offences that exposed them to the severest penalties of the law. Escaped from all restraint, and forming his associates into a band of robbers, the youth became their captain, surpassing all of them in deeds of violence and blood. Time ran on, and the aged apostle once more visited the same

church. He asked about the youth, and wept when he heard his story. He took his way instantly to the district which the robber-band infested, and was taken prisoner by the outguard of the banditti. He neither tried to fly nor offer any resistance to his captors. "Conduct me to your captain," he said to them; "I have come for the very purpose of seeing him." As soon as he recognised the venerable apostle advancing towards him, the captain would have fled; but the apostle pursued him, crying out, "Why dost thou fly, my son, from me thy father—thy defenceless aged father? Have compassion on me, my son. Fear not, thou still hast hope. I will intercede with Christ for thee. Believe that Christ hath sent me." The fugitive was arrested. They met once more. The apostle entreated him; prayed with him; solemnly assured him that there was pardon for him at the hands of Christ; and did not leave him till he led him back again, and restored him to the Church. In the manner of his restoring that

erring youth, the beloved apostle showed how thoroughly he had imbibed the spirit of his divine Master, from whose lips half a century before he had listened to the words. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted.'

V.

The Incredulity of Thomas.*

Was it his fault, or his misfortune simply, that Thomas was not present at that first meeting on the evening of the day of the resurrection? Clearly enough, we cannot charge his absence with the same kind of neglect, with which now a refusal to join in the ordinary services of the sanctuary would be loaded; for no such services had then been instituted, nor had any authority, human or divine, as yet prescribed them. That evening conference, hastily summoned under the prompting of the strange incidents of the day, was, in fact, the first of those assemblings on the Lord's day which have since become one of the established customs of Christianity. But as no such custom had as yet been established, Thomas cannot be accused of violating it. The cir-

* John xx. 24–29.

cumstances, however, under which that conference was held, were so peculiar, the pressure which prompted it so urgent, that we cannot imagine that any slight or fortuitous impediment would have kept any one of the eleven away. It may, therefore, have been Thomas's extreme incredulity as to the fact of the resurrection, the utter and blank despair into which the death of his Master had cast him, which indisposed him to join the rest. If it were so; if he kept aloof from his brethren, as believing that no good could come from their assembling; that it was all over with the hopes as to their Master which they had been cherishing; that they were mere idle tales which had been circulating about his having risen from the dead,—then, for his neglect of all that Jesus had predicted about his death and resurrection, and for his treatment of the testimony of Peter and the other early visitors of the sepulchre, he was amply punished, in losing that sight of the risen Jesus given to the others, and in his being left, for the seven

days that followed, to the wretchedness of uncertainty and doubt—an uncertainty and doubt which would be all the bitterer, as contrasted with the unclouded convictions and new-born joy of his brother disciples. Whilst they, lifted from the depths of their despair, were congratulating one another on the great triumph over death and the grave which their Master had achieved, were strengthening each other's faith, and heightening each other's joy, he, alone and disconsolate, was scraping together the scanty food on which his incredulity might nourish itself. In the course of that week, his brethren made many attempts to rid him of his distrust. But all in vain; the more they insisted, the more he refused. The stronger they affirmed the proof to be, the more inflexible became his resolution to resist it. The particulars of the manifold conversations and discussions which would, no doubt, go on between them, are not preserved. All that is told is, that he took and kept resolutely to that position behind which he entrenched himself,

as he said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." What were the grounds, real or fictitious, upon which this incredulity of Thomas rested; and how came that incredulity to take such a shape, and to embody itself in such a declaration?

Here, I think, by realizing distinctly the actual condition of things, both as regards the external circumstances which surrounded him, and the jaundiced eye with which he was disposed to look at them, we may convince ourselves that the incredulity of Thomas was not due to any reluctance on his part to believe in the resurrection, simply because of its being a strange, a supernatural occurrence. In that age, and in that country, this was a form of unbelief altogether rare, quite unlikely to have been exhibited by Thomas, or any follower of Jesus Christ. A belief in the supernatural was general, almost universal. To withhold his

belief in any occurrence, purely and solely because it was miraculous, would have made a man about as conspicuous then, as a belief in all the alleged miracles of ancient and modern times would make a man conspicuous now. Between that time and this, the world has undergone an entire revolution in the state of its general belief, in the form of its practical infidelity. Besides, even if there had been a large leaven of Sadduceeism working originally in the mind of Thomas, he had already witnessed, in his attendance upon Christ, incidents too extraordinary for him to refuse credence to the resurrection purely and solely on the ground of its singularity. Neither he nor any others of the Lord's disciples—unwilling, as they all were at first, to believe that their Master was indeed alive again; difficult as they all were of conviction on this point—would have admitted their initial hesitation and incredulity to have proceeded from any such source. It was not the character of the event, it was the nature of their precedent faith in, and

their precedent expectations about, their Master and his kingdom, which generated the difficulty which was felt by them as to believing in the resurrection. The true fountain of their earlier incredulity lay within, and not without; in their prejudices in regard to other matters, not in the nature and circumstances of the resurrection. There appears to me, therefore, to be a violence done to historic truth, to the real state of the case, when Thomas is taken, as he so often is, as a type or early instance of that unbelief, belonging rather to modern than to ancient times, which staggers at all miracles, and is indisposed to admit anything supernatural.

Thomas's incredulity seems to have outstripped that of all the other disciples. They would not believe the Galilean women, when they brought to them the first reports of the resurrection; but they had believed when Peter told them that he had seen the Lord, even before they saw him with their own eyes. But Thomas will not believe,

though to Peter's testimony there is added that of the two disciples who went out to Emmaus, and that of the whole body of the disciples to whom Jesus had afterwards appeared. To what is this excess, this peculiar obstinacy of unbelief on Thomas's part to be attributed? Was he the most prejudiced man among them; the man who clung most tenaciously to his earlier ideas and prepossessions, and would not let them go? Did those common elements of unbelief, which operated in the breasts of the others as well as in his, yet work in his with so much greater force as to signalize him in this way, and keep him standing out in his distrust for so long a time beyond them? There was one of those elements which we have some reason to think did work powerfully on Thomas. It would be quite a mistake to conceive of Thomas, because of his abiding incredulity, that he was a cold, selfish, cautious, unsanguine, naturally misbelieving man, hard to convince of anything which lay outside the circle of his own observations, or that did not touch

or affect his own interests. Whatever in origin and nature his scepticism was, it was not the scepticism of religious indifference, nor did it spring from a predisposition to doubt. That the spirit of curiosity, of inquiry, was strong in him, we may perhaps infer from his breaking in upon our Lord's discussion in the upper chamber, saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Fuller evidence that he possessed and knew how to exercise the critical faculty; that he liked to search and sift the evidence, and get at the real and solid grounds for believing, shall meet us presently; but we must dismiss from our minds the idea that he answered in any way to the description which Wordsworth has given us of the man—

> "A smooth-rubb'd soul, to which could cling
> No form of feeling, great or small;
> A reasoning, self-sufficient thing,
> An intellectual all in all."

The only other notice of him in the gospel narrative, besides the one already alluded

to, and that in the passage now before us, forbids us to entertain any such ideas of Thomas's natural character and disposition. Escaping out of the hands of his enemies, Jesus had retired to Bethabara. To him, in his retreat, the sorrowing sisters sent their message: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." The messengers were left without an answer. But, after two days of delay and inaction, Jesus abruptly says to his disciples, without explaining anything of the object of his visit, "Let us go into Judea again." It seemed a fatal resolution; the disciples try to turn their Master from acting on it. "Master," they say to him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" Their Master then tells of the reason for his going, and of his resolution at all hazards to carry out his intention. Then, says one of the twelve, if he will go, go to almost certain death, "let us also go, that we may die with him." Had the name not been given, had we not been told which of them it was who so instantly,

so warmly, so generously declared himself ready to die with his Master rather than desert him, we should have said that it must have been Peter who spake these words; but it was Thomas, to whom much of Peter's ardour appears to have belonged. Upon such a man, so ardent in his attachment to his Master, we can readily believe that the blow of the crucifixion came with a peculiarly stunning force. In proportion to the eagerness of his hopes would be the blankness of his despair; nor is it wonderful that, sunk into the depths of that despair, he would at first refuse to believe in the resurrection. Still, however, attribute what extra force we may to this one or that other of the ingredients of the unbelief shown by Thomas in common with his brethren, it seems difficult to understand the pertinacity of Thomas in standing out so long and so stubbornly against all attempts of his brethren to convince him. The great bulk of them had believed before they had seen the Lord. Why should that evidence, which

was sufficient to carry their faith, not have carried his? Yes, but they all at last had seen; they had seen, and he had not. In that very distinction do we not get sight of the secret bias by which the spirit of Thomas was swayed over to an unwillingness to give credence to the resurrection, an incredulity which, in self-justification, built up those buttresses of self-defence, behind which it finally entrenched itself, and from which it would not be dislodged? The others had seen him, and he had not; why should he be asked to believe on different evidence from theirs? He had been as attached a follower of Jesus as any of them. Why should he be singled out, and left the only one who had not seen his Master? He did not like, he did not choose, to be indebted to others for the grounds of his believing. He had just as good a right to ocular proof as they had; and, in fact till he got it he would not believe. The unwillingness that his faith should be ruled by theirs, generated a disposition to question the soundness of

that faith. The Evangelist has given us only the conclusion to which Thomas came, the result of the many conferences with his brethren, and to which he for so many days so resolutely adhered. The very terms in which he embodied this resolution enables us to fill up the blank. Jesus had come amongst them, the other disciples would tell Thomas, suddenly, silently,—the door being shut; they had not seen him till he was standing in the midst. It was very like the mode of a spirit's entrance; very unlike the manner in which one clothed with a solid, substantial body would or could appear. They confessed to Thomas that unless it were the two disciples who had just come in from Emmaus, all of them at first believed that it was a spirit, none of them that it was Christ: that he had himself noticed this, and had corrected their first and false impression. He had eaten in their presence, he had shown them the marks in his hands and side; he had said, "Handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye

see me have." Yes, but had any of them accepted the invitation, had any of them made such scrutiny of these marks, as to be sure that they were not superficial? They could not say they had. Strictly interrogated by one who was anxious to detect any weak point in the evidence, they could not deny that it was within the limits of the possible that there might have been a mistake; that there was a difference, they could not tell what, between the appearance of their Master as they had seen him before death, and as they saw him at the evening meeting. Seizing greedily upon anything which could possibly create a doubt, and turning it into an instrument of self-justification, Thomas at last declares, "Except I shall not only see in his hands the print of the nails, but shall put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." No small amount of ingenious casuistry springing out of wounded pride, an exaggerated feeling of self-consequence working in a nature not

less strong in will than ardent in affection.

"I will not believe." 'And is it even thus,' we feel disposed to make answer, 'that thy hurt vanity hopes to redeem itself from the fancied oversight; is it thus that placed, as thou thinkest, below thy brethren, by not having got the same proof given them, thou thinkest to set thyself right by putting thyself above them, and declaring that that proof may have been enough for them, but is not enough for thee? What right hast thou to ask a kind or amount of evidence above that which has satisfied all these thy brethren, and which would have satisfied any one unbiassed by deep precedent prejudice? What right hast thou to dictate thus to God, and to declare that thou wilt not believe till the form of proof thou prescribest be afforded? Thou wilt not believe—and if thou dost not, who but thyself will be the loser? Hadst thou been in the hands of man, in any other hands than those of so gracious a Master, thou mightest have wait-

ed long enough ere the proof was given, which in such spirit was demanded.'

Seven days go past, and the apostles are once more gathered together on the evening of the second first-day of the week. Thomas is with them now. What brought him there? Why, if he thought them wrong in rejoicing over an event, in the reality of which they had not sufficient reason to believe, did he join himself to their company? Because, I believe, with all his assumed and declared incredulity, he was not in his inmost heart such an utter unbeliever as he would have others think he was. He had taken up a position which it behoved him to defend; but I am much mistaken, if a strong desire, an expectation, nay, something even of a faith, that it was even as his brethren had told him, was not working latently, yet strongly in his breast. We often grievously err in this respect, in our judgment or representations of others. If a man is known or said to be a covetous or an ambitious man, we are too apt to make him all

covetousness or all ambition, and nothing beside. And so Thomas, being obstinately incredulous, we might imagine him to be utterly so. Not at all likely. There was room in him, as there is in most men, for very opposite and conflicting states of thought and emotion. We believe, therefore, that it was in a very mixed state of faith and feeling that Thomas sat down that evening with the rest. They have not sat long when again, in the very same way in which he had come before, Jesus enters and stands before them. The general salutation over, and before another word was spoken, he turns to Thomas and says, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." How sudden, how unexpected the address! Thomas knew that for seven days none of the disciples had seen the Lord; none of them could have reported to him the words that he had used. Yet now are these very words repeated. It is the omniscient Jesus; it is his own well-

loved Master who stands before him. In stant within him is the rebound from in credulity to faith,—to a far higher faith than that simply in the reality of the resurrection; of that he has no doubt. He does not what the Lord desires, and what he himself desired before. He does not put his finger into the print of the nails; he does not thrust his hand into the side. Enough to see that well-known form; enough to hear that well-loved voice. That sight, those words of Jesus, are sufficient to rebuke and to remove his unbelief. In a moment his doubts all flee; faith takes their place: a faith purified, exalted, strengthened; a faith in the true divinity as well as in the true humanity of his risen Lord; a faith higher, perhaps, at that moment than that to which any of his brethren around had attained. Adoring, believing, loving, the fervent, affectionate Thomas casts himself at his Master's feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!"

A great advance here, we may well believe, on all Thomas's earlier conceptions of

his Master's character. And may we not believe also that the bitter experience of the preceding week,—the troubled exercises of thought through which he then had passed, the searchings of those Scriptures which it was reported to him had been quoted and commented on by Christ himself,—had all been secretly preparing him to take this advancing step; to believe that the Messiah of ancient prophecy was a very different Being in character and office from what he had before imagined; much lowlier in some respects, much higher in others. And now, all at once, the revelation of the Redeemer's glory bursts upon him as Jesus in person stands before him; and not only does all his former incredulity die away, but on its ruins there rises a faith which springs up all the higher and stronger, because of the pressure by which it had previously been kept in check. Jesus knew how prepared Thomas was to call him Lord and God. He then might be asked to do what to Mary was so emphatically forbidden. "Touch me not," he said to

her whose love to him had too much in it of the earthly, the human,—too little of the spiritual, the divine. "Reach hither thy hand," he said to Thomas. The invitation may be safely given to him who is ready to own the divinity of his Lord.

The title given him, conveying as it did so distinct and emphatic a testimony to that divinity, Jesus at once, as if it were his by birthright, accepts. But though he refuses not the tendered homage, he passes no such approving judgment on him who presents it, as he had formerly done upon Peter, when he had made a like confession of his faith, and Christ had called him blessed. Instead of this, Christ administers now a mild but effective rebuke: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Christ could not mean by saying so, to declare that he who believes without seeing is more blessed than he who upon sight believes; for that would exalt the weakest believer now above the strongest

believer of Christ's own age. The idea that Jesus evidently intended to convey was this, that of two kinds of faith equally strong, that was to him a more acceptable, and to the possessor a more peace-giving one, which rested on reasonable testimony in absence of personal observation, than that which would not yield to such kind of evidence, and demanded that ocular demonstration should be given. It was, in fact, as addressed to Thomas, a distinct enough yet delicate intimation, that his faith had been all the more acceptable to his Master if it had not been delayed so long. But though this was the primary meaning of the saying, it is not without its bearings upon those who, like ourselves, have not seen, and yet are called to believe. The spirit of Thomas still lives among us. Have we not often detected ourselves, thinking at least, if not saying, that, had we lived in the days of Jesus Christ,—had we seen what those disciples saw,—we would not have doubted as they did; that, give us but the evidence that they had, and

our doubts would disappear? We practice thus a strange deception upon ourselves. We transfer ourselves in fancy to those scenes of the gospel history, carrying with us all the ideas of our age, forgetting that very different were the ideas of the men of that generation, who, though they had the advantage of the sight, had the disadvantage of the prejudices of their country and their epoch. So equalized in point of advantage and of responsibility do we believe the two periods to have been, that we may safely affirm, that the men of this generation who will not believe in the testimony of the original eye-witnesses, had they been of that generation, would not have believed though they had been the eye-witnesses themselves. He who now says, I will not believe till I see, would not, even seeing, have then believed.

Two closing reflections are offered. *First* Take this case of Thomas, his throwing himself at once at his Master's feet, exclaiming, My Lord, my God, as a most instructive in-

stance of the exercise and expression of a true, loving, affectionate, appropriating faith. It is outgoing, self-forgetting, Christ-engrossed. No raising by Thomas of any question as to whether one who had been incredulous so long, would be unwelcome when at last he believed. No occupation of mind or heart with any personal considerations whatever. Christ is there before him; thought to be lost, more than recovered; his eye beaming with love, his encouraging invitation given. No doubt about his willingness to receive, his desire to be trusted. Thomas yields at once to the power of such a gracious presence, unshackled by any of those false barriers we so often raise; the full, warm, gushing tide of adoring, embracing, confiding love, goes forth and pours itself out in the expression, *My Lord, and my God!* Best and most blessed exercise of the spirit, when the eye in singleness of vision fixes upon Jesus, and, oblivious of itself, and all about itself, the abashed heart fills with adoration, gratitude, and love, and in the fulness of its emotion

casts itself at the feet of Jesus, saying with Thomas, My Lord, My God.

Second, Let us take this instance of our Lord's treatment of Thomas, as a guide and example to us how to treat those who have doubts and difficulties about the great facts and truths of religion. There was surely a singular toleration, a singular tenderness, a singular condescension in the manner of the Saviour's conduct here towards the doubting, unbelieving apostle. There was much about those doubts of Thomas affording ground of gravest censure, the bad *morale* of the heart had much to do with them. It was not only an unreasonable, it was a proud, a presumptuous position he took up, in dictating the conditions upon which alone he would believe. What abundant materials for controversy, for condemnation did his case supply! Yet not by these does Jesus work upon him, but by love,—by simply showing himself, by stooping even to comply with the conditions so unreasonably and presumptuously prescribed. And if, in kin-

dred cases, when the spirit of religious incredulity is busy in any human breast, doing there its unhappy work in blasting the inward peace, waiving all controversy we could but present the Saviour as he is, and get the eye to rest upon him, and the heart to take in a right impression of the depth and the tenderness and the condescension of his love, might not many a vexed spirit be led to throw itself down before such a Saviour, saying, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

VI.

The Lake-side of Galilee.*

Speaking to his disciples in the upper chamber before his death, Jesus said to them, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." On the morning of the resurrection, the angel said to the first visitants of the empty sepulchre, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." And as they went to execute this message, Jesus himself met them, and said, "Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Pointed so frequently and emphatically to Galilee as to the chosen district within which their Master was to manifest himself, we might have anticipated that the apostles would have taken their immediate departure from Jerusalem. They

* John xxi. 1–14.

could not have done so, however, during the Passover week, without being guilty of a great offence against the religious feeling of their fellow-countrymen. They stayed, therefore, for these ten days still in the holy city. This delay in proceeding to Galilee, had their Master's sanction not indistinctly put upon it, by his twice appearing to them collectively, whilst they yet lingered in the metropolis. And yet, upon the first of these occasions, on the evening of the day of the resurrection, Jesus said to them, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." How are we to explain the contradictory orders upon which, given in the course of the same day, they were called upon to act? Galilee had obviously, for some special reasons, been selected by Christ as the region in which some special revelations of himself after his resurrection, were to be given. Did this spring from a strong desire to revisit the scenes of his early life, the neighbourhoods in

which most of his wonderful works were done? In solitude and concealment, shunning everything like frequent or continued intercourse even with his own disciples, Jesus was to spend forty days on earth, before his ascension to the Father. Would it have been unnatural, that he should desire that the larger number of these days should be given to regions hallowed to him by associations such as human memory had never before been entrusted with? Or was it that, as Galilee had absorbed the largest share of his earthly labors, and had yielded to that labor the largest fruits, so it was there that the largest number of his disciples could be congregated, and that the quietest and securest opportunity of meeting with them could be had? It was there, we know, that he met the five hundred brethren; perhaps, it was there only that so many could have been collected, or, being collected, could have found a secluded and protected meeting-place. Whatever the motives were which prompted the Saviour to fix beforehand up-

on Galilee, and to announce it as his chosen trysting-place for meeting with the brethren at large, one can well enough see how desirable it was that the apostles should be laid under the double obligation—*first*, of going northward to Galilee, that they might share in the benefit of the most public of all Christ's appearances after his resurrection; and, *secondly*, of returning to Jerusalem, as to the place in which the promise of the descent of the Spirit was to be fulfilled, and they were to be clothed with power from on high to execute their great mission upon the earth. Nearly two months were to elapse, ere that baptism of the Spirit was to be given. It might have been inconvenient or dangerous for them to have spent so long an interval idly, without occupation or means of support, in the metropolis. But neither were they to be suffered to return to their old Galilean haunts without an intimation being made to them, that it was in Jerusalem that their apostolic work was to make its auspicious commencement. It is not

likely that the apostles saw this at the time as we now see it, as they saw it afterwards themselves. When they first left Jerusalem, they had perhaps no small difficulty in harmonizing the apparently conflicting instructions which had been issued. One thing was very apparent, that their Master intended to show himself to them in Galilee; and to Galilee, therefore, so soon as the Passover celebration was over, they retired.

One evening some of them are together by the lake-side. Whether any of them had ever thought of resuming their old way of living, or had actually engaged in it, we do not know. All, however, is, this evening, so inviting; the lake looks so tempting; the night, the best time for the fisher's craft, so promising; their old boats and nets so ready to their hand—that one of them, the very one from whom we should have expected such a proposition to come (in whom the spirit of his old occupation should be the readiest to revive), Peter says to them, "I go a fishing." The others say, "We also go

with thee." It was not a concerted meeting this by the lake-side. The proposal is evidenty on the part of Peter a thought of the moment, and it is agreed to in the same quick spirit as that in which it is made. The meeting, the proposal, the acquiescence, all seem fortuitous, accidental. Yet was it not all foreseen, all pre-arranged? An unseen eye follows these seven men as they embark, and watches them at their fishing toil; even the eye of him who was waiting for them in the morning by the shore, by whose hand it was that the whole accidents of that night and morning were regulated. Even so let us believe, in regard to the most casual occurrences which happen still to the disciples of Jesus, that a providence as special and as gracious as that of which these seven men were the objects, is in them all, and over them all, causing them all to work together for their eternal good. Fitfully, curiously, without art or fixed design of ours, may the web of our destiny be woven, the threads thrown at random together, no

orderly pattern apparently coming out of their conjunction, and yet, of all that web there is not a single thread whose place, whose color, whose motion is not arranged with infinite skill, so as to mould our spiritual and eternal existence according to its predestined plan. As we recall and review the past, we may trace up to some trivial origin, some chance meeting, some accidental conjunction of circumstances, our present position, our present habits, our present character. As we do so, we may be disposed to ascribe all to a blind fate; but let this scene by the Galilean lake-side, and many other incidents of a like kind which the life of our Redeemer supplies, be the living proofs to us, that "chance also is the daughter of forethought," that the minutest details as well as the most momentous incidents of our earthly history, are all under the constant guidance of our Redeemer.

The disciples toiled all night; it was the time most favorable for their work. These seven men knew the lake well, every bay of

it where fish were most likely to be taken; and they were skilful at this craft. Yet, though they did their best, and toiled all through the watch of the night, they caught nothing. Two years before, Peter had once been out all night with as little success, but Peter had never seen so many practised hands in a single boat toiling so long, and toiling so fruitlessly. Had the remembrance of that other night of like fruitless labor been suggested to any of the seven? It would not seem that it had. The morning breaks upon the quiet lake, upon the wearied boatmen, and finds them within one hundred yards or so of the shore. There, upon the beach, a stranger stands; stands as any inhabitant of the neighbourhood might have stood, who, having caught sight of the fishing-boat, and knowing how its occupants must throughout the night have been engaged, wanting to be one of the first purchasers from them of the fruit of their toil. One might have thought that the very sight at such an early hour of a solitary figure up-

on the shore, would have awakened curiosity in the hearts of the disciples, and that, as they had been frequently and distinctly told, it was here in Galilee they were to see their Master again, it might have occurred to them that it was Jesus. The very kind and form of the question put to them, "Children, have ye any meat?"—a question which it appears much more clearly from the original than from our English version, was just the one which any stranger wishing to become a purchaser of their fish might have put—may have served rather to allay than to stimulate their curiosity. It is certain, at least, that they did not at first recognise him. Having got an answer to his question having been told that they had nothing in the boat, Jesus said to the exhausted and hopeless fishers of the night, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They may have wondered for a moment at an order of that kind being given; they may have thought that the stranger had seen some indication of the presence of

fish in that direction, which had escaped their eye. They may have had but little faith that the new cast of their net would be more successful than the many they had made before. But what the stranger directs can easily be done. They may try one last throw of their net before they land. They do so, and now at once they see that not without a reason had the order been given. Now, they find, that within the small enclosure which their net makes, such a multitude of fishes is embraced, that they have difficulty in drawing it through the water towards the land. And now it is that love proves itself as quick of eye as it had already shown itself to be swift of foot. When Peter and John ran out to the sepulchre, John outstripped Peter in the race. He outstrips him also in the recognition. They are together in the boat; a strange attraction binds the gentlest to the most forward of the twelve; and no sooner does it appear that the last cast of the net, taken in obedience to the command of him who stands up-

on the shore, is not only successful, but successful to such an extraordinary degree, than the thought flashes into the mind of the beloved disciple that it must be Jesus. "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The Lord! Thomas has taught them the expression; they begin to speak of him as the Lord. "It is the Lord," says John, and satisfies himself with saying so. And now once again the characteristic difference between the two men reveals itself: John the first to recognize; but Peter the first to act upon the recognition. At once believing that it is as John has said, Peter, leaving it to the others to drag the net to shore, flung himself into the water. It was but a short distance to the shore—about 200 cubits, 100 yards. He was quickly beside the stranger; although it does not appear from the narrative that he gained anything by his greater forwardness of movement.

It is soon evident that it was not the want of any supply out of their boat which had led Jesus to put to them the question,

"Children, have ye any meat?" On landing, the disciples find a fire of coals, and fish already laid thereon, and bread at hand. Who gathered these coals? Who kindled that fire? Whence came the fishes and the bread? Mysteriously provided, the materials for the morning meal are there, quite independent of any supply which the last draught of the net may produce. But though all be ready for the weary and hungry fishermen, they must not leave their own proper work unfinished. As they gather in wonder around that fire to gaze on him who has furnished this fresh food for them, "Bring," said Jesus to them, "of the fish which ye have now caught." As if reminded, by this order, of his having failed to take his proper part in the labour of dragging the net to shore, Peter is now the readiest to act upon this injunction. It is he who lands the net; and not till the fish taken in it have been secured and counted, does Jesus say to them, "Come and dine." He takes the bread and the fish,

breaks and divides them among the seven. Was the miracle of the mountain-side here, on a smaller scale, again enacted? Was there only food enough for one man there at first, and did that food multiply as he blessed (which we may assume he did) and parted it among them? This at least is certain, that he was known now not of Peter and John alone, but of the seven, in the breaking of the bread. They all know it is the Lord; yet none of them durst ask him anything about himself,—a mysterious awe felt in his presence sealing their lips. It is in silence that this morning meal by the lake-side is partaken of. This, John says, was the third time that Jesus had showed himself; not literally the third time that he had showed himself to any one, but the third time that he had showed himself to the disciples collectively assembled in any considerable number, after he had risen from the dead.

It had been by a miraculous draught of fishes, like the one now before us, that, at the outset of his ministry, Christ had drawn away

three at least of the seven now around him from their old occupations, and taught them to understand that in following him they were to become fishers of men. Why was that miracle repeated? Because the lesson which it conveyed was needed to be again given and re-enforced. Had they been told at first to go to Galilee without the hint of a power to be given from on high, to be bestowed at Jerusalem, they might have returned to their old neighborhoods, under the impression that they were to abide there permanently. And now that, bereft of the companionship of Christ, deprived of the means of support, if not driven by necessity yet tempted by opportunity, they resume their ancient calling, was it not needful and kind in Jesus to interfere, and, by the repetition of that miracle, whose symbolic meaning they could not fail at once to recognise, to teach them that their first apostolic calling still held good, that still the command was upon them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

The two miracles, the one wrought at the beginning, the other at the close of the Lord's ministry, were substantially the same. Regarded as symbols or mute prophecies, they carried the same significance. Yet there were differences between them, perhaps indicative that the one, the earlier miracle, was meant to shadow forth the first formation, the later miracle the future and final ingathering of the Church. In the first instance, Christ was himself in the vessel; in the second, he stood upon the shore. In the first, the order was a more general one: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second, a more specific one: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." In the first, the nets began to break, and the ship to sink; in the second, nothing of the kind occurred. In the first, it was a great multitude of fishes that were enclosed, of all sizes, we may believe, and of all qualities. In the second, it was a limited number of great fishes which was drawn to land. It may be

a fancy—if so, however, it is one that many have had fond pleasure in indulging—to see in these diversities, the distinction between the present and visible effects of the casting forth of the gospel net upon the sands of time, and that landing and ingathering of the redeemed upon the shores of eternity. Treat this idea as we may—and great as are the authorities which have adopted it, I own to the disposition to regard it more as a happy illustration than a designed symbol, —the image is a scriptural one, that both individually with Christians, or collectively with the Church, the present scene of things is the night of toil, through whose watches, whether fruitful or not of immediate and apparent good, we have to labour on, in hope of a coming dawn, when upon the blessed shores we shall hail the sight of the risen Lord, and share with him in partaking of the provisions of a glorious immortality.

The night is far spent; that day is at hand. Let our toil then be one of hope, and our hope one full of immortality. And yet,

dark and often troubled though it be, has not this night of our earthly sorrow shown us orbs of light we might never have seen by day? What should we have known of the Saviour had it not been for our sin; what of his power to comfort, but for our present sorrow? He is, indeed, the great light of this dark world of ours. In his incarnation we behold the earthly shining of this light. And what shall we say of his miracles, that long series of wonders done, of which this one by the lake-side was the closing one, but that they were the means taken by him for the fuller shining forth of that light which lighteth every man who cometh into this world? Of the first miracle it is said in Scripture, and the saying may be applied to the last as to the first, to them all throughout,—"this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory." His glory as the Son of the Father, stands forth exhibited in these miracles,—there is a simplicity, an ease, a dignity in the very manner of their

performance, which distinguishes him from all other wonder workers. Moses must plead hard, and struggle long in prayer with God, ere Miriam is cleansed of her leprosy. Elijah and Elisha must stretch themselves upon the dead ere life comes back again. Peter must say to the lame man at the Temple gate, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." These all act as servants in the name of Another, who permits them upon rare occasions, to speak in their Master's name, and to use their Master's power. But Christ, as a Son in his own house, speaks in his own name; puts forth his own power. His language to a leper is, "I will, be thou clean;" he touches the bier, the bearers at the touch stand still; he looks upon the lifeless body, and saith, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." His word of power is heard in the recesses of the rocky sepulchre: "Lazarus, come forth."

But chiefly the glory, not of power, but of goodness, of love, was manifested forth in

these miracles of Jesus. The miracles of Moses were miracles of awe and terror; wrought in rivalry of the colossal powers of ancient heathenism, they were on a scale of amplitude befitting their design, their chief spheres external nature, the earth, the rock, the river, the ocean, and the sky. Around the miracles of Jesus, a milder, but richer glory gathers; their chief sphere, the region of human life, man's sins, man's sorrows, man's maladies, man's wants. It is divine power acting as the servant of divine love, which meets to gladden our eye. Nor is it in these miracles alone of Jesus, that this love and power in blended action are to be beheld. It is not so much as outward evidences of the divinity of his mission, but still more as exhibitions and illustrations of his divine character, that we prize and love to study these miracles of our Lord; and their chief lesson is lost on us, if we fancy that it was then only when he was working them, that the divine power and the divine goodness that lay in him were acting. That

power and love were everywhere, and at all times going forth from him; and the only true believer in love and power divine, is he who sees them in every change of nature, in every work of providence, in every ministration of grace, and who never fancies that it is in the working of miracles alone that the great hand and power of the Omnipotent are to be beheld. The miracles are to be regarded by us, not as stray specimens, rare and exclusive manifestations of that unseen Lord whom we adore, but as methods merely which he has taken, suited to our ignorance and to our indifference, to startle us into attention, to make visible to us that which ever lurks behind unseen, to quicken us to that faith which, when once rightly formed and exercised, shall teach us to see God in all things, and all things in God.

VII.

Peter and John.*

The repetition of the miraculous draught of fishes was nothing else than a symbolical renewal of the commission given originally to the apostles, intended to teach them that their first calling to be fishers of men still held good. There was one, however, of the seven for whose instruction that miracle was intended, whose position towards that apostolic commission was peculiar. He had taken a very prominent place among the twelve, had often acted as their representative and spokesman. But on the night of the betrayal he had played a singularly shameful and inconsistent part. Vehement in his repeated assertion that though all men should forsake his Master he never would, though thrice warned, he had thrice over, with superfluous oaths, denied that

* John xxi. 15–23.

he ever knew or had anything to do with Jesus. How will it stand with Peter if that apostolic work has to be taken up again? Has he sufficiently repented of his sin? Will he not, in the depth of that humility and self-distrust which his great fall has taught him, shrink from placing himself on the same level with the rest? Does Jesus mean that he should re-occupy the place from which, by his transgression, he might be regarded as having fallen? Singling him out when the morning meal by the lake-side was over, Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these, thy brethren, my other disciples, do?" What a skilful yet delicate method, without subjecting him to the painful humiliation of having his former denials of his Master exposed and dwelt upon, of testing and exhibiting the trueness and deepness of Peter's repentance. Will he repeat the offence; will he again compare himself with the others; will he again set himself above them; will he renew that boasting which was the sad precursor

of his fall? How touchingly does his answer show that he perfectly understood the involved reference to the past; that he had thoroughly learned its humbling lessons. No longer any comparing himself with, or setting himself above others. He will not say that he loves Jesus more than they; he will not say how much he loves. He will offer no testimony of his own as to the love he feels. He will trust his deceitful heart no more. But, throwing himself on another's knowledge of that heart which had proved better than his own, he says: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

Our Lord's reply is a most emphatic affirmative response to this appeal. It is as if he had said at large: 'Yes, Simon Barjona, I do know that thou lovest me; I see too that thou wilt make no boast of thy love; neither in that nor in anything else wilt thou set thyself above thy fellows; by the pressure of this probe into thy throbbing heart it has been seen how true and deep thy penitence has been, how thoroughly it

has done its work in humbling thee. And now, that thou, and these thy brethren, may know and see how readily I own and acknowledge thee as being to me all thou ever wert, I renew to thee this great commission; I reinstate thee in the apostolic office,—"Feed my lambs!"'

Peter was not asked a second time whether he loved more than others; but as three times he had been warned, and three times he had denied, so three times will Jesus reinstate, restore. Can w wonder that Peter was grieved when, for the third time, the general question, Lovest thou me, was put to him? It was not the grief of doubt, as if he suspected that Jesus only half believed his word, but the grief of contrition, growing into a deeper sadness at the so distinct allusion to his three denials, in the triple repetition of the question. With a sadder and fuller heart, in stronger words than ever, he makes the last avowal of his love: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

In the Greek tongue, the language in which this conversation between Christ and Peter is recorded, two different words are used for the one translated *love*, two different words for the one translated *feed*, and two different words for the one translated *sheep*. We may believe that in that dialect of the Hebrew which was spoken by Christ, from which the Greek was itself a translation (for we are to remember that only in one or two instances have the actual words spoken by Jesus been preserved), there was some way of making the same distinction of meaning which is expressed in the different words for *love*, and *feed*, and *sheep*. It would be quite out of place to go further here into such a topic. The result is that Jesus first asks Peter whether he cherishes to him a love, spiritual, holy, heavenly; that Peter declines using the term which his Master had employed, and contents himself with speaking of a kind of affection, simpler, more personal, more human; that Jesus first commits the feeding of the lambs to Peter, then

the general guidance or oversight of the whole flock that he had purchased with his blood; and that finally he returns to the simple idea of feeding, as applied to this whole flock.

Of more importance is it to notice (as supplying the room for this variety) the change of image from that of the fisher to that of the shepherd, as representing the apostolical or ministerial office. Had it been solely as fishers of men that Peter and his brethren had been described, as the business of the fisherman is to get the fish into the net, and draw them safe to land, so it might be thought that the one office of the spiritual fisherman was to bring sinners to Christ, to get them safe into his arms. A true yet contracted idea of the scope and bearing of the ministerial office might come thus to be entertained. It is very different when that office is presented to us under the idea of a pastorate. A much truer, because ampler conception of its manifold privileges, responsibilities, means, duties, objects, is thus

acquired. Oversight, guidance, care, protection, provision, these of the most varied kind, as adapted to all the conditions, exposures, wants, of all the separate members of the flock, are all embraced within the function of the shepherd. But let us not here fashion to ourselves a perfect ideal of what the spiritual shepherd is, or ought to be, and then imagine that each under-shepherd of the great Christian flock is bound, in some degree, to realize, in his own person and his own work, each separate attribute, each separate mode or class of activities, which go to constitute the model that we have constructed. The work of the Christian ministry was, in the apostolic age, almost wholly evangelistic, aggressive. There was not the call or the opportunity then for the exercise of many of those gifts, which came afterwards to be consecrated to the cause of Christ, to the advancement of his kingdom. Yet, even then, there was no one fixed course, which all apostles, and all presbyters, and all elders, and all deacons were

alike called upon to follow. Had we the lives and labors of all the twelve apostles before us, I am persuaded that we should be as much struck with the diversity, as with the multiplicity of their operations. Very different, as, in a single instance, we shall presently see, were the characters, the dispositions, the capabilities of the twelve men whom the Lord himself selected as the first propagators of his religion upon earth; and room was found for all these differences acting themselves out in the different spheres of labor selected by, or assigned to them. So is it, so should it be still, in the labor of individual Christians, in the work of the Christian ministry. God has scattered among us a great variety of gifts, has set us where a great variety of services may be rendered. As there are many members in one body, yet all have not the same office; so neither have all the true members of Christ's mystical body the same office to discharge. "Let not the hand then say to the eye, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have

no need of thee." Let not those who are engaged in one kind of Christian work criticise or condemn those who are engaged in another. Let each of us do the best we can with the kind and amount of the talent intrusted to us; let each of us try to do that which both naturally and immediately comes to our hand, not judging one another; "for who art thou who judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," but not to thee.

There is, however, one common, universal, indispensable qualification for all genuine Christian work—a supreme, a constraining love to Christ. Once, twice, thrice, is the question, "Lovest thou me?" put to Peter; and once, twice, thrice, no sooner is an affirmative reply given than the injunction follows: 'If thou lovest me, as thou lovest me, then feed my lambs, feed my sheep.' And the first, the second, the third pre-requisite for all true feeding of the lambs, the sheep of the Saviour's flock, is attachment to Himself—a love to Jesus Christ running over

upon all who, however weakly, do yet believe in him. The want of that love, nothing can supply: not mere natural benevolence — that may lead its possessor to do much to promote the happiness of others, may win for him their gratitude and goodwill, but will not teach him to labor directly and supremely for their spiritual, their eternal good; not the mere sense of duty—that may secure diligence and faithfulness, but will leave the work done, under its exclusive promptings, sapless and dry — the element not there of a warm and tender sympathy, that best instrument of power. It is love-inspired, love-animated labor, which Jesus asks for at our hands. That we may be able, in any degree, to realize it, let it be our first desire and effort to quicken within our souls a love to him who first, and so wonderfully, loved us; the flickering and languid flame in us, let us carry it anew, day by day, to the undying fire that burns in the bosom of our Redeemer, to have fresh fuel heaped upon it, to be rekindled, refreshed, sustained,

expanded. To know and believe in the love that Christ has to us, to feel ourselves individually the objects of that love, to open our hearts to all the hallowed influences which a realizing sense of that love is fitted to exert—this is the way to have our spirits stirred to that responsive affection to him, which gives to all Christian service purity and power.

"Simon, Simon," our Lord had said to Peter before his fall, "Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted"—converted, Jesus means here not in the ordinary sense of the term, but recovered, restored—"then strengthen thy brethren." That strengthening of the brethren formed part of the shepherd's office, now anew committed to Peter; and what a lesson had he got in the treatment which he had himself received at the hands of the Chief Shepherd, as to how that office should be discharged! The prayers, the warnings, the look of love, the angel's message, the private

interview, this conversation by the lake-side —these all told Peter of the thoughtfulness, the care, the kindness, the pitying sympathy, the forgiving love, of which he had been the object. Thus had he been treated by Jesus; and let him go and deal with others as Christ had dealt with him.

So far in what Christ had spoken, whilst there was much that was personal and peculiar to Peter, there was much also that had a wider bearing. But now the Lord has a word, which is for Peter's ear alone. "Whither I go" (he had said to him in the upper chamber) "thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards;" and Peter had said in reply, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I am ready to go with thee to prison, and to death; I will lay down my life for thy sake." These words of the apostle, though sadly falsified the night when they were spoken, still were to hold good. Peter did follow his Master, even unto death. He did lay down his life for Jesus' sake; crucified, as his Lord had been.

Knowing this, and knowing that he needed all the encouragement which could be given him, to fortify him to meet the martyr's doom, not only will Jesus in that private interview in the resurrection-day wipe all his tears away, and now in presence of his brethren reinstate him in his apostolic office, but he will do for him what he does for no other of the twelve—he will reveal the future so far as to let him know by what kind of death it should be that he should glorify God—to let him know that the opportunity would be at last afforded him of making good the words which he too hastily and boastfully had spoken. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." The explanatory clause which is introduced here, creates the impression that there had been a break or interruption of the discourse. From verse twentieth, it

would appear, too, that Jesus had made some movement of withdrawal. These two circumstances combine in inducing the idea, that when our Lord said to Peter, "follow me," he meant simply that he should go along with him as he now retired. If, however, the words of the nineteenth verse were spoken in immediate connection with, and in continuation of what is recorded in the eighteenth, then, in saying "follow me," our Lord might have had in his eye the very words of Peter about following him to prison and to death, and have meant, in using them, to say, 'When thou shalt be old, and another shall seize upon thee and bind thee as they seized and bound thy Master in preparation for his crucifixion, then Peter, follow me, through the Cross to glory.'

It is very difficult, owing to the briefness of the gospel narrative, to picture to our eye the scene which followed. Did Jesus, as he said "follow me," arise to depart, and was Peter in the act of following when he turned

and saw John following also? Did John mistake so far the meaning of Christ's word and act, as to consider himself equally with Peter called upon to follow; or was it of his own motion, and without any real or imagined invitation that he was acting? However it was, Peter, his mind full of the many thoughts that this pre-intimation of his death had excited, turns and sees John by his side. His own fate had been foretold; what, he wondered, would be John's. The beloved disciple had once, at his suggestion, put a question to their Master about the others; now he will put a question about John—a question of natural and of brotherly curiosity, yet somewhat out of place. He has resumed too rapidly his old position, and his old hasty and forward ways. Jesus will not become a fortune-teller, to gratify even a friendly inquisitiveness. He puts a check upon the unbefitting inquiry, and yet, singularly enough, even in rebuking, he answers it. '"If I will that he tarry, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow

thou me." Each man's path, as each man's duty, is separate and distinct. What the lot of another man may be, has nothing to do with the regulation of thine individual course. What is it to thee, Peter, whether John's destiny shall be the same or different from thine? The thing for thee to do is not to turn aside to busy thyself with his hereafter, but to occupy thyself with the duty that lies immediately before thee to discharge. What is that to thee? follow thou me.' But if I will that he tarry till I come: Only imagine that Jesus was other than divine, and how arrogant the assumption here of his will regulating human destinies, fixing the time and the manner of his disciples' death; Deity incarnate alone was entitled to use such language: "If I will that he tarry till I come." When John wrote his Gospel, that saying of Jesus was not understood. Some regarded it as implying that John should never die. The beloved disciple himself saw only so far into its meaning, that it contained no direct asser-

tion of that kind, but further he did not then see. Perhaps afterwards, when he saw all the apostles die out before, and witnessed, as only he did, the destruction of Jerusalem, of which Christ had often spoken as identified with his coming,—perhaps at that time, forty years after the meeting by the lake-side, he remembered the words that his Master had spoken, and wondered as he perceived how remarkably they were fulfilled.

Next to the absence of all notice of our Lord's mother, few things are more remarkable, in the narrative of the period after the resurrection, than the silence respecting John. One of the earliest visitants at the sepulchre, present at both the evening interviews at Jerusalem, the disciple whom Jesus loved is neither spoken of nor spoken to. This is the only case in which he meets our eye, and he appears here rather in conjunction with Peter than with Jesus. In the account of our Lord's ministry, though John was frequently associated with Peter, it was as one of the two sons of Zebedee, the tie

to his brother James being then obviously a stronger one than that to Peter. But from the hour when the two entered together the hall of the High Priest, a singular attraction appears to have drawn these two men together. The brotherly tie yields to one which has become still stronger, and instead of its being Peter and James and John, it is now Peter and John who are seen constantly in company with one another. This is all the more singular, when one considers how unlike the two were in natural character, in original disposition.

John was born a lover of repose, of retirement. Left to himself, he would never have been an adventurous or ambitious man. Even in his very motion there had been rest. Had he never seen the Saviour, he would have remained quite contented in the occupation to which he had been brought up. To sit upon the sunny banks of that lovely inland lake mending his nets, his eye straying occasionally across its placid waters, or lifted to the blue expanse above;—to

take his accustomed seat in his fishing-boat, to launch out by night under these burning heavens, and sweep over the well-known haunts, would have been enough for him; he neither would have desired nor sought for change. It may seem to militate against this idea of John's character that he and his brother were called Boanerges, the Sons of Thunder. We are not told, however, the reason why this title was bestowed on them, —it may have been derived from something peculiar in the father rather than in the sons. Nor can we allow the bestowal of an unexplained and ambiguous epithet to outweigh the whole drift and bearing of the gospel narrative, which speaks so much of the meekness and modesty and gentleness and retiringness of John. But let us not confound John's yielding gentleness with that spirit of easy compliance which shuns all contest, because it does not feel that there is anything worth contending for. Beneath John's calm and soft exterior there lay a hidden strength. In the mean, vulgar strife

of petty, earthly passions, John might have yielded when Peter would have stood firm. But in more exciting scenes, under more formidable tests, John would have stood firm when Peter might have yielded. This was proved on the night of the arrest, and the day of the crucifixion. And there was latent heat as well as latent strength in John. As lightning lurks amid the warm, soft drops of the summer shower, so the force of a love-kindled zeal lurked in his gentle spirit. The Samaritans might a thousand times have refused to receive himself into their dwellings, and it had stirred no resentment in his breast; but when they contemptuously refused to receive the Master to whom he was so ardently attached, it was more than he could endure. He joined his brother James in saying, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?"—a solitary outbreak of a sentiment but seldom felt, or if felt, habitually restrained; yet that single flash reveals an inner region where all kinds

of vivid emotions lived and moved and had their being.

Nor let us confound John's simplicity with shallowness. If it be the pure in heart who see God, John's was the eye to see farther into the highest of all regions than that of any of his fellows. If it be he that loveth who knoweth God—for God is love, John's knowledge of God must have stood unrivalled. We reckon his as belonging to the highest order of intellect; not analytical nor constructive; the logical faculty, the reasoning powers, not largely developed; but his quick bright eye of intuition, which, at a glance, sees farther into the heart of truth than by the stepping-stones of mere argumentation you can ever be conveyed. There were besides under that calm surface which the spirit of the beloved disciple displayed to the common eye of observation, profound and glorious depths. The writer of the Gospel and the Epistle is, let us remember, the writer also of the Apocalypse; and if the Holy Spirit

chose the human vehicle best fitted for receiving and transmitting the divine communications, then to John we must assign not the pure deep love alone of a gentle heart, but the vision and the faculty divine, the high imaginative power.

Peter, again, was born with the strongest constitutional tendency to a restless and excited activity. He could not have endured a life of monotonous repose. He was a child of impulse; he would have been a lover of adventure. He was not selfish enough to be a covetous, nor had he steadiness enough to be a successfully ambitious man; but we can conceive of him as intensely excited for the time by any distinction, or any honour placed within his reach. Had he never seen the Lord, one cannot think of him as remaining all his life a fisherman of Galilee; or, if the natural restraints of his position kept him there, even in that fisherman's life he would have found the means of gratifying his constitutional biases. Eager, ardent, sanguine, it

needed but a spark to fall upon the inflammable material, and his whole soul kindled into a blaze, ready to burst along whatever path lay open at the time for its passage. The great natural defect in Peter was the want of steadiness, of a ruling, regulating principle to keep him moving along one line. Left to work at random, the excitability of such a susceptible spirit involved its possessor often in inconsistency, exposed him often to peril. We have, however, had this apostle so often before us, that we need not say more of him. Enough has been said to bring out to your eye the strong contrast in natural character and disposition between him and John. Yet these were the two of all the twelve, who finally drew closest together. The day of Pentecost wrought a great change upon them both, and by doing so linked them in still closer bonds. The grace was given them which enabled each to struggle successfully with his own original defects, and to find in the other that which he most wanted. It

is truly singular, in reading the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, to notice how close the coalition between Peter and John became. Peter and John go up together to the temple. It is upon Peter and John that the lame man at the gate fixes his eye. After he was healed, it is said that he held Peter and John, as if they were inseparable. It was when they saw the boldness of Peter and John that the members of the Sanhedrim marvelled. And when they commanded them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, it is said that Peter and John answered and said, as if in very voice as well as in action they were one—(Acts iii. 1, 3, 11; iv. 13, 19).

Blessed fruit this of that all-conquering grace of God, which lifts Peter above the fear of reproach, and John above the love of ease; which brings the most timid and retiring of the twelve to the side of the most stirring, the most impetuous; supplying a stimulus to the one—a regulator to the other; bringing them into a union so

near, and to both so beneficial—John's gentleness leaning upon Peter's strength; Peter's fervid zeal chastened by John's pure, calm love. In the glorious company of the apostles, they shone together as a double star, in whose complemental light, love and zeal, labour and rest, action and contemplation, the working servant and the waiting virgin, are brought into beauteous harmony.

VIII.

The Great Commission.*

The very fact that among those who saw Christ upon the mountain side of Galilee, there were some who doubted, convinces us that more than the eleven must have been present at the interview. For after his repeated appearances to them in Jerusalem, after his meeting with them, and eating with them, and showing them his hands and his side, and asking them to handle him,—that any of the eleven should at this after stage have doubted is scarcely credible. And our impression of the incredibility of this is deepened by reflecting that it was to a place of his own appointment they now went, and that for the very purpose of seeing and conversing with him once more. There are other and still weightier reasons,

* Matt. xxviii. 16–20.

which leave no ground for doubt, that the appearance of the risen Saviour recorded by St. Matthew—the only one which this evangelist does record, and to which we may therefore conclude that a peculiar importance attached—was the same with that to which St. Paul refers, when he says, "After that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."

It was the will of Christ to show himself alone after his resurrection, once, and once only, to the whole collective body of his disciples; to as many, at least, as could conveniently be congregated at one time, and in one place. It was in Galilee that this purpose could best be accomplished. There, and there only, could so many as five hundred of his disciples be found, and brought safely together. After the ascension, when all assembled at Jerusalem that the city and its neighbourhood could supply, the number of them gathered there was

only one hundred and twenty. Hence, perhaps, one reason why, on the night before his death, and on the morning of his resurrection, the apostles were so repeatedly and emphatically told by Christ himself, and through the commissioned angel, that he went before them into Galilee, and it was to be there that they were to see him. Their attention was thus fixed beforehand upon an interview at which the most public and impressive manifestation of their risen Lord was to be made.

The necessity of the case required that both time and place should be named beforehand, fixed by our Lord himself, by him communicated to the apostles, by them announced to others; the tidings conveyed abroad over Galilee, wherever disciples of Jesus were to be found. One can imagine what intense curiosity, what longing desire to be present at such an interview, would be kindled wherever the intelligence was carried. In due time the day appointed dawns. On towards the indicated moun-

tain side, group after group is eagerly pressing;—the solitary one from some far-off hamlet, the one of his family that has been taken while the others were left, mingling with the larger companies that Capernaum and Bethsaida send forth. All are gathered now. From knot to knot of old Galilean friends, the apostles pass, assuring them that this is indeed the day and the place the Lord himself had named; and giving a still quicker edge to the already keen enough curiosity, by telling of the strange things they had so lately seen and heard at Jerusalem.

What new thoughts about the Crucified would be stirring then in many a breast! A prophet, all of them had taken him to be; but if all be true that they now are hearing, he must be more than a prophet; for which one of all their prophets ever burst the barriers of the grave? The Messiah, many of them had taken him to be; but now, if they are to retain that faith, their former notions of who and what the

Messiah was to be, must be greatly changed. A Messiah reaching his throne through suffering and death, is an idea quite new to them. They ask about his late appearances, and are lost in wonder as they hear how few they have been, how short; at what a distance, even from the eleven, the risen Jesus had kept; what a studied reserve there had been in his intercourse with them, so different from his old familiarity. He is, he must be, a Being other—far higher—than they had fancied him to be. Is it really true what they had heard himself say, but had not fully understood, that he was the Son of, the equal of the Father—God incarnate? Thomas tells them that he fully believes so. The other apostles tell them that he has opened their minds through a new interpretation of the prophecies to quite different notions about himself and his kingdom from anything they had hitherto entertained. In what a very singular condition of thought and feeling, as they try to realize it, must that company of five hun-

dred brethren have been, which collected on the mountain side, and stood awaiting Christ's coming?

At last the Lord appears: we know not how; whether bursting at once on their astonished vision, without shadow of approaching form or sound of advancing footstep, seen standing in the midst; or whether seen at first far off, alone in the distance, silently watched, as treading the mountain side he drew nearer and nearer to them, till at last he was by their side. However he came, when they saw him, we are told they worshipped:—with clasped hands, or on bended knee; some, like Thomas, with profound and intelligent adoration; others with a worship, heightened by wonder, somewhat vague, but pure as the mountain air they breathed. But some doubted—those who saw him now for the first time after his resurrection. Here, as in almost every first interview of the kind, there was a doubt, one speedily dispelled, whose natural source we have already attempted to indicate.

"And Jesus came and spake to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." To whatever height of conception and belief the men of that company may have been rising, upon whose ears these words fell, as Christ's greeting to them in the first, the only interview they were to have with him after his resurrection, we may be assured that they went much beyond what they ever expected to hear coming from those lips. Already they had worshipped, gazing in wonder on him, as one who had come to them from the dead. But what fresh subject for wonder now; what higher reason for worship now? Power they knew him to possess; power over earth, and air, and water; power over the spirits of all flesh; power even over the demons of darkness. Power enough they had attributed to him to set up an earthly kingdom in front of all opposition, to crush all its enemies under his feet. Such power they were prepared to hear him claim, and see him exercise. But they were not pre-

pared to hear him say, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Far above all their former thoughts of him does Jesus thus ascend, and, by ascending, try to lead them up. It has been already suggested, that one part of Christ's design in dwelling for these forty days on earth, and in the mode of conduct to his disciples which he pursued, was gradually to lift their minds from lower and unworthier thoughts of him to a true conception of his divine dignity and power; and it confirms our belief in this to find that in the greatest, the most public, the most solemn manifestation of himself which Christ at that time made, his first declaration to the assembled five hundred was, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth!"

When first uttered, how many eyes were fixed in wonder upon the man who spake these words! Eighteen hundred years have gone past since then; millions upon millions of the human family have had these words repeated to them, as spoken by the Son of

Mary; have regarded them as honestly and truly spoken; as expressing but a simple fact. How could this have been? How could a man of woman born, who had lived and died as we do, have been regarded as other than the vainest, most arrogant of pretenders, who said that all power in heaven and in earth was his, had there not been something in the whole earthly history of this man which corresponded with and bore out such an extraordinary assumption? And even such were the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. They have now been for centuries before the world, as the life and death of one who claimed to be the eternal Son of God, the equal of the Father; of one who said that as the Father knew him, so knew he the Father; of one who said that whatsoever things the Father did, the same did the Son likewise; that the Father had delivered all things into his hand; that all power was his in heaven and in earth. And no one has ever been able to show anything in the character, the sayings, the doings of

Jesus Christ, inconsistent with such extraordinary pretensions; all is harmony with the claim, all goes to sanction and sustain it. It seems to us that the simple fact that there was a Man who lived for three-and-thirty years in familiar intercourse with his fellow-men, who yet, before he left the world was recognised and worshipped by five hundred of his fellow-men as one who was guilty of no presumption in saying, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth;" and who, since that time, has been believed in by such multitudes as God incarnate, goes far, of itself, to sustain the belief that he was indeed the Son of the Highest, and that it was no robbery with him to count himself equal with God; for, only imagine that he was no more than he seemed to be, a Jew, the son of a Galilean carpenter, educated in a village in the rudest part of Judea,—that such a man, being a man and no more, could have lived so long upon the earth without saying or doing anything which could belie the idea that in him dwelt all the fulness of

the Godhead bodily, appears to us to present far greater difficulties to faith than does the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is not so much, however, as one possessed of it by original and native right, that Jesus lays claim here to supreme and unlimited power. He speaks of the "all power in heaven and in earth" as "given," —given by another; by Him whose law he had so magnified, whose character he had so glorified in his life and by his death. It was as the fruit and reward of his obedience unto death that he was invested by the Father with unlimited authority and power. One of the conditions of the everlasting Covenant was that, crucified in weakness, Christ should be raised in power; that, on account of his having suffered unto death, he should be crowned with glory and honour. And his first word to this company on the mountain side is the first announcement from his own lips, that, his great decease having been accomplished, this condition of the covenant had been fulfilled; that he

had entered upon possession of the mediatorial sovereignty. Constituted heir of all things, the great inheritance had to be acquired, the kingdom won. The heir still lingers for a season upon earth, but he is on his way to the throne on which he is to sit down, covered with glory and honour, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to him. Jesus indeed speaks here as if he were already upon that throne. As in the upper chamber, when the agony of the garden and the sufferings of the cross still lay before him, he spake as if the passion were over, as if heaven had been already entered, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;" so here, on the mountain side, he speaks as if the cloud had already carried him away,—as if his feet were already standing within the throne of universal sovereignty,—as if, having raised him by his mighty power from the dead, the Father

had already set him on his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; had put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

It is from the lofty elevation thus attained, it is as clothed with the supreme, limitless authority and power thus acquired, that Jesus issues the great commission to the Church, Go ye therefore and teach or make disciples of all nations; or as you have it in another evangelist, Go, preach the gospel to every creature. A mission so comprehensive was as novel as it was sublime. Familiarity with the idea blunts the edge of our wonder, but let us recollect that at the time when, in a remote Jewish province, gathering a few hundred followers around him, Jesus sent them forth, assigning to them a task which should not be accomplished till

every creature had heard the glad tidings of salvation in his name, and all nations had been brought to sit under his shadow,—that at that time the very idea of a religion equally addressed to, and equally adapted to all nations, equally needed by, and equally suited to every child of Adam, was wholly new, had never been broached, never been attempted to be realized. There was no form or system of idolatry that ever aimed at, or was indeed capable of such universality of embrace. The object of its worship was either confined to certain definite localities; the gods of certain mountains, groves, or streams, whose worship was incapable of transfer; or they were the offspring and expression of some peculiar state of society, whether savage or civilized, suited only to that particular state or condition of humanity in which they had their birth and being. It is true that in all the more educated nations of antiquity, there were men who soared far above the vulgar prejudices and superstitions of their times, whose religion,

such as it was, had certainly nothing about it of that confinement by which the popular belief and worship were characterized; but if free thus from one kind of confinement, their religion was all the more liable to another. Unfitted for the many, it was by eminence the religion of the few. Its disciples gloried in its exclusiveness. It would have lost half its charm in their eyes, had the people at large adopted it. But there was no danger of that. It was essentially unfitted for the multitude. Its votaries would have laughed at the idea of trying to convert even a single village to their faith. Such, in the days of Jesus Christ, in all heathen countries, were the multiform idolatries of the many, the exclusive faith of the few. In Judea, it was somewhat different. Sacred books were circulating there, in which, under dark prophetic symbols, hints were given of a future gathering of all the nations under one great king and head. But these hints were universally misunderstood and misapplied. Amid all the

confined and exclusive religions of that period, there was not one more confined, or more exclusive, than Judaism. Both socially and religiously, the Jew of the Saviour's time was one of the most shut up and bigoted of the race. Everything about him, —his dress, his food, his domestic customs, his religious ceremonies,—marked him off by a broad wall of separation from the rest of the species. He gloried in this distinction. He thought and spoke of himself and his brethren as the elect of God, the holy, the clean: the Gentiles were the dogs, the polluted, the unclean. His attachment to his religion, as a faith proclaimed exclusively to his forefathers, and bequeathed by them as a national heritage to their children, was intense. His faith and his patriotism were one, and the deeper the patriotism the narrower the faith. And yet it is among this people; it is from one who was brought up in one of its wildest districts; it is from one for whom birth, position, education, had done nothing in the way of weaning him

from the common prejudices of his country men, making him in that respect different from any other Jew; it is from one who, save occasional visits to Jerusalem, never moved beyond the neighbourhood of a Galilean village, nor shared in the benefits of any other society than it supplied;—it is from him that a religion emanates whose professed object is to gather into one, within its all-embracing arms, the whole human family. The very broaching of a project so original, so comprehensive, so sublime, at that time and in those circumstances, stands out as an event unique in the history of our race. In vain shall we try to explain it on the supposition that it was the self-suggested scheme of the son of a Galilean tradesman. The very time and manner of its earthly birth claims for it a heavenly origin. Had Jesus Christ done nothing more than this, —set the idea for the first time afloat, that it was desirable and practicable to frame for the world a religious faith and worship which should have nothing of the confine-

ments of country, or period, or caste, but be alike adapted to all countries, all periods, all kinds and classes of men,—he would have stood by himself and above all others.

But he did more than this. He not only announced the project, but he devised the instrument by which it was to be accomplished; he put that instrument in its complete and perfect form into the hands of those by whom it was to be employed. Study the history of all other revolutions, civil or religious, which have taken place upon this earth, and you will find it to be true of all of them, that the methods by which they were wrought out, were at first devised by different men and at lengthened intervals, and afterwards perfected by slow degrees. The men engaged in effecting them had to feel their way forward; had often to retrace their steps; had often to cast aside an old instrument because it was found to be useless, or because a new and better one had been fallen upon in its stead. It has not been so with the establishment

and propagation upon the earth of the religion of Jesus Christ. The instrumentality employed here has been the same from the beginning. It has never asked for, because it never needed, improvement or change. We have it now in our hands in the same form in which it was put by Christ himself into the hands of the first disciples of the faith. The experience of so many centuries has detected no flaw, revealed no weakness, provided no substitute. When Jesus said, Go, make disciples of all nations, he announced,—and that in the simplest, least ostentatious way, as if there were no novelty in the project, no difficulty in its execution, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that it should be taken up, as if it were the surest thing that it could be carried out,—he announced the most original, the broadest, the sublimest enterprise that ever human hands have been called upon to accomplish. And when he said, Go, preach the gospel to every creature, he supplied, in its complete and perfect form, the

instrument by which it was to be realized. And that simple gospel of the grace of God, preached, proclaimed, made known among all nations, to every creature, has it not proved itself fitted for the work? No nation can claim this gospel as peculiarly its own. No class or kind of human beings can appropriate it to themselves. It speaks with the same voice, it addresses the same message to the wandering savage and to the civilized citizen, to the most abandoned reprobate and to the most correct and fastidious moralist. Its immediate and direct appeal is to the naked human conscience, to man as a sinner before his Maker. Wholly overlooking and ignoring all other distinctions of character and condition, it regards us all as on the common level of condemnation, under the sentence of that law which is holy and just and good. To each of us, as righteously condemned, it offers a free, full pardon through the death, an immediate and entire acceptance through the merits and mediation, of Jesus Christ. It presents the

means and influences by which a holy character and life may be attained on earth, and it opens up the way to a blissful immortality hereafter. If, looking simply at the outward means employed, we were asked wherein lay the secret of the immediate and immense power which the Christian religion at first exerted upon such multitudes of men, we should say that it was in the call it carried with it to every man, just as it found him, to repent, and repenting, enter into immediate peace with his Maker through Jesus Christ; in the assurance that it gave of God's perfect good-will to him, his perfect readiness to forgive and accept; the proclamation which it made that, by Christ's death, every let or hindrance had been removed, and that every sinful child of Adam was invited to enter into that rest which Christ had provided for all who came to him. Only think, when these tidings were new, and when they were at once heartily and cordially believed in, what a wonderful revolution in man's inner being

they were fitted to effect! Can you wonder when, to a world grown weary of its follies, its idolatries, its philosophies, its gropings in the dark, its struggles to find the truth, its passionate desire to know something of that world beyond the grave, for the first time it was told that God was not a God afar off but very near at hand, for he had sent his own Son into the world to make such a revelation of him that it could be said, Whosoever had seen him had seen the Father also;—it was told that a life beyond the grave was no longer a matter of speculation, for Christ, the Son of the Eternal, had risen as the first-fruits of a coming general resurrection of the dead;—it was told that access to God and to God's full favour was no longer a thing of doubt and time and difficulty,—to be reached, if reached at all, through prayer and priests, and services and sacrifices,—for a new and direct and open way had been revealed by God himself, through which any one might step at once into his gracious presence, into the ful'

light of his reconciled countenance;—it was told that the forgiveness of all his past sin was no longer a matter about which, to the last moment of his life, a man was to be kept hanging between hope and fear, for through this man Christ Jesus there was offered to all who would accept it, an instant remission of all his sins;—it was told that poor, weak, tempted, erring, sinful, suffering man had no longer to regard himself as an alien, an exile from the world of the pure and the blessed, frowned on by the beings, the powers, he worshipped, his whole life turned into a struggle by one or other kind of propitiatory offerings to keep on something like good terms with his conscience and his God, for there was *One* who had loved and suffered and died to save him; a man like himself, and yet a God; a man to pity, a God to protect; a man to sympathize, a God to succour; whose presence, companionship, friendship, were waiting to cheer his path in life, and illumine for him the dark valley of the shadow of death;—

can you wonder that when, in all its simplicity and in all its fulness of comfort and consolation, the gospel of the grace of God was first proclaimed to sinful men, it was hailed by thousands as indeed glad tidings from the far country? Or, looking at the Scripture records, can you wonder that the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, as they broke bread from house to house did eat their meat with such gladness and singleness of heart, praising God? Can you wonder, when with one accord the people of Samaria gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that there was great joy in that city? Can you wonder, when the Ethiopian treasurer had his eyes opened to see who it was who had been wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities, and found in Jesus the very Saviour that he needed, that he went on his way rejoicing? Can you wonder, when at Antioch and elsewhere the Gentiles heard for the first time all the words of this life, that

"they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord?" Many and great indeed were the hindrances which arose: slow often and difficult the progress that was made. But the way in which these hindrances generally acted, was to cloud with some obscurity the simple tidings of the love of God in Christ to sinful men; to close the door that his grace had opened; to fetter with this condition or with that, the full reconciliation with our Maker into which we are all invited at once to enter; more or less, in fact, to assimilate the religion of Jesus to all the other religions which have represented God's favour as a thing to be toiled for through life, and to be won, if won at all, only at its close,—the life itself to be passed in a sustained uncertainty as to whether it would be got at last or not,—whereas it is the distinction and the glory and the power of the gospel of the grace of God, that it holds out to us at the very first, as a gratuity, which it has cost Christ much to purchase, but which it costs us nothing to acquire,—

the forgiving, loving favour of the Most High. It asks us to dismiss here all our doubts and fears; to know and believe the love which God has to us; to see in Jesus one in whom we can undoubtingly confide, who is absolutely to be depended on, in whom it is impossible that too much confidence can be reposed; who by every way that love could devise, or the spirit of self-sacrifice achieve, has tried to get us to trust alone, unhesitatingly, habitually, for ever in him.

What is it—how often do we ask these hearts of ours—what is it that keeps us from welcoming such glad tidings? What is it which keeps these tidings from filling our hearts with a full and continued joy? What is it which keeps us from trusting one so entirely worthy of our confidence as Jesus Christ? Nothing whatever in the tidings; nothing in Him of whom the tidings speak.

Try if you can construct any form of words better fitted than those which meet you in the Bible, clearly and forcibly to express the idea that God is now in Jesus

Christ most thoroughly prepared, is most entirely willing, to receive at once into his favour every repentant, returning child of Adam, and that there is not a single man anywhere, or upon any ground, shut out from coming and accepting this pardon—coming and entering into this peace. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. Come unto me, *all* ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say Come. And let him that is athirst come And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Any one—every one—all—whosoever; we know no other words which could more thoroughly take in all, excluding none. These, however, are but words. The great thing is to get fixed in the mind and heart that which these words point to and

express; that the God whom we have offended approaches us in love, in Christ, assuring us of a gracious reception; the embrace of a Father's guiding, protecting arms, and the shelter hereafter of a Father's secure and blessed home.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Our Lord's forerunner had adopted the practice of baptizing those who desired to be regarded as his followers. His baptism, however, was prefigurative and incomplete. It was simply a baptism unto repentance. It was a faith only in the kingdom as at hand that was required of those who submitted to it. But the kingdom had come. The day of Pentecost, on which it was to be visibly erected, was drawing near. Another higher and fuller baptism was now to be proclaimed, and then begin to be administered.

Baptizing into the name, not simply *in* the name, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that might mean no more

than performing the rite in the name, that is, by the authority of God. The name of God, we know, is the term commonly employed in Scripture to indicate the character and the nature of the Supreme. When the expression meets us, then—the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—we understand it as expressive of the one nature revealed to us in the three personalities of the Triune Jehovah. Now to be baptized into that name is to be taken up into, to be incorporated with him whose name is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The term is expressive or symbolic, not of a mere outward and formal acknowledgment or confession of our faith in the Divinity, as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us under that mysterious distinction of a threefold personality; but of an inward and spiritual union, communion, fellowship, with the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. The Israelites were all baptized unto Moses, and, as so baptized, were taken up into, and incorporated with, that spiritual community of which the Mo-

saic was an external type. They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; derived all their strength and refreshment from the same spiritual sources. And even so are all baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, emblematic of that oneness with each and all of the three Persons of the Trinity, which the Saviour had in his eye, when he prayed for his own, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And that same oneness through Christ with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is it not equally if not still more distinctly and impressively held out to our view in the sacrament of the Supper? "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion or common participation of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion or common participation of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partak-

ers of that one bread." Closest, loftiest, most blessed of all fellowships, that to which in Jesus Christ we are elevated, and of which our participation of the two sacraments of the Church is the external sign.*

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The crowning glory of the gospel—of its proclamation of a free and full justification before God, alone through the merits of the Saviour—is this, that it opens the way and supplies the motive to a right and dutiful discharge of all commanded duty. Enthroning Christ in the heart, planting deep within it, as its strongest and most constraining motive, a supreme love to him, it produces an obedience which springs not from fear, but from love. "If ye love me," said Jesus to his disciples, "keep my commandments." He did not question or suspect the reality of their love. He knew there was a kind of love they all had to him. But that affection,

* For additional remarks on the two Sacraments, see Appendix C.

tender as it was, might not be strong, regarding him mainly in the character of a companion or friend, it might fail to recognise him in the character of their Master, their Lord. 'If ye indeed love me, then,' says Jesus, to them and to us, 'let not love die out in the mere feeling of attachment to my person; let it find its becoming and appropriate expression in the keeping of my commandments; so shall it be preserved from evaporating in the emotion of the hour; so shall it be consolidated into a fixed, a strong, a permanent principle of action.' All love, even that of equal to equal, if unexpressed, if unembodied, has a strong tendency to decline; but if it be love of a dependent to a superior, of a servant to a master, the love which does not clothe itself in obedience, becomes spurious as well as weak. A bare acknowledgment in words, or in some formal act of bare profession of the fatherly or masterly relationship,—what is it worth if the authority of the father be disregarded, the orders of the

master be disobeyed? If we fail to regard Christ as the Lord of the conscience, the lawgiver of the life; if our obligations to be all and do all he has commanded be unfelt; if the love we cherish to him go not forth into action,—such barren and unfruitful affection will not be recognised by him, who hath not only said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," but also, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." On the other hand, if our love to Christ, however faint and feeble it be at the first, has not only an eye to see him and admire his beauty, but an ear to hear him and obey his word; if under the strong conviction that to offer love without service to such a Saviour as Jesus is, would be but another variety of that mockery to which he was subjected in the judgment-hall of Pilate; if the sincere and honest effort be put forth to obey the precepts he has given for the regulation of our heart and life,—then shall each fresh effort of that kind, however short

it fall of its destined aim, exert the happiest influence upon the love from which it springs, quickening, expanding, elevating, intensifying it. Each new attempt to do his will shall reveal something more of the loveableness of the Redeemer's character. The loving and the doing shall help each other on, till the loving shall make the doing light; and by the doing shall the loving be itself made perfect.

And one marked peculiarity of the obedience thus realized shall be this, that all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded will be attempted, at least, if not discharged. "Ye are my friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you;" a test of friendship very sad and hopeless in the application of it, were it meant that whatsoever Christ has commanded must be done, up to the full measure and extent of his requirement, before we could be reckoned as his friends. Then were that friendship put altogether beyond our reach. A test, however, both true, and capable of imme-

diate and universal application, if we regard it as meaning that it is by the universality of its embrace, and not by its perfection in any one individual instance, that the obedience of the Christian is characterized; that there shall not be one command which is freely, wilfully, and habitually violated; not one known duty which is not habitually tried to be discharged. As ever then we hope to be acknowledged as his friends, his true and faithful followers, let us esteem every precept he hath given concerning everything to be right; and let us give ourselves to the unreserved, unrestricted doing of his will (Matt. v. 21, 27).

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Jesus had spoken much to his disciples about his departure from them, about his leaving them alone. "I go my way," he had said to them in the upper chamber, "and none of you asketh, Whither goest thou? A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. I

came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." It was in such an affectionate, sympathizing way that Jesus sought beforehand to prepare the minds and hearts of his disciples for the shock of his death, the sorrow of his departure. For a little while they did not see him; he was lost in the darkness of the sepulchre. Again, for a little while, they did see him, on those few occasions when he made himself visible to them after his resurrection. Even, however, on one of the earliest of these appearances, he seemed at pains to remove the idea from his disciples' minds that he had returned in order to abide. "Touch me not," was his language to Mary, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It was as one on his

way to the Father, tarrying but a little while on the earth, that he desired during the forty days to be recognised. But now, when, in this great interview on the mountain side, he manifests forth his glory, takes to himself his great power, announces the universal sovereignty which had been put into his hands as the Mediator, issues the great commission upon which, in all ages, his followers were to act, he closes by speaking, not of his approaching departure, but of his continued, his abiding presence: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Omnipotent reveals himself thus as the Omnipresent also: 'Go ye into all nations, Go to the farthest corner of the habitable globe, but know that, go where you will, my presence goeth with you. Labour on, generation after generation, but know that the time shall never come when I shall leave you or forsake you. My bodily presence I remove; with the eye of sense soon you shall see me no more; but my spiritual presence shall never be withdrawn;

it shall abide with you continually, even to the end of the world, till I come again, till that time arrive when it shall no longer be said that I will come to you to live with you,—when I shall come to take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.'

The richest legacy he could have left to it is this promise of his abiding presence with the Church. Looking at the Church generally, at the church in any one country or in any one city, any one section of the church,—we may often wonder and be afraid as we contemplate the difficulties she has to contend with in going forth to execute the great errand upon which she has been sent. This is the light, however, in all the darkness. All power has been given to Christ in heaven and earth; he has been constituted Head over all things for the Church. This headship over all the principalities and powers of darkness, this power over all things in heaven and earth, shall he not employ in helping onward the great

movement which is to give him the heathen for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession?

It is not indeed by bare might and power that this great conquest of the world is to be won. When Jesus says, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth, he does not add, Go ye therefore, and by the employment of so much of that power as I may please to communicate, subdue all mine enemies, uproot all rival thrones, set up and extend my kingdom. No; but, Go teach and preach, instruct, persuade; the conversion of the world to me must be a thing of willingness, and not of compulsion. They must be taught; for how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But not only must

they be taught, the people must be made willing in the day of the Lord's power,—a power which shall work on them, not from without but from within, drawing them to himself. But how shall that power be brought into full and living operation? It comes, it works according to our faith, in answer to our prayers; it comes through the realizing of the presence of the Saviour; the pleading for the promise of the Spirit to be fulfilled. Do we ask ourselves why is it that so many hundred years have rolled away since these words were spoken in Galilee; since the world was given by him into the hands of his followers, to go out upon it, and reclaim it unto God, and yet so little progress has been made towards the great consummation; not half the globe yet even nominally won? The answer is at hand: Our lack of faith; our lack of prayer; our lack of efforts undertaken in the name, and prosecuted in the promised strength of the Redeemer.

But this great parting promise of our

Lord is to be taken by us as addressed not merely to the Church at large in her collective capacity, or as engaged in her public work of propagating the truth as it is in Jesus. It is to be taken as addressed to every individual Christian. "Behold," says Jesus, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." I will come; I and my Father will come. We will come. Was ever such a plural used as that! Who is he who associates himself in this way with the omnipresent and omnipotent Jehovah, who engages for the Father, and what he engages for the Father undertakes equally himself? We will come to him, not to pay a transient visit, not as the wayfaring man who turns aside to tarry but for a night. We will take up our abode with him. To have these words of Jesus realized in one's

daily, hourly life, to know and believe that he is indeed with us, beside us, has come to us, has taken up his abode with us, this is our comfort and our strength. Nothing short of this will do. No general belief in all that Jesus was and did and suffered here on earth, no belief in anything about him, nothing but himself in living, loving presence, seen and felt by us, as a presence as real as that of the closest companionship of life; as real, but a thousand times closer, a thousand times more precious.

How well he knows this who has said and done so much to encourage his people in all ages to realize his presence with them in all the stages of their earthly life! A famine drives Isaac from Judea. He halts at Gerar, meditating a still farther flight. The Lord appears to him and says to him, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and will bless thee." Let the patriarch but know and feel that the Lord is with him, and no

fear shall drive him from the place which that God hath appointed as his habitation. Sleeping Jacob, lies with his head upon the stony pillow; the vision comes to him by night; the Lord speaks to him from the top of the mystic ladder: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Let Jacob but carry a sense of that presence along with him, and his solitary path and his fears of exile shall be lightened, and that future, so dark to him as he fled from his father's presence, shall be turned into light. It was a heavy task for hands like Joshua's to undertake to be successor to such a man as Moses. When that great leader of the people died, how destitute and helpless must Joshua have felt! What a crowd of difficulties must have risen up before his mind, as standing in the way of the invasion and the conquest of Canaan! But all his discouragements were met by that word of

Jehovah: "Be strong and of a good courage; as I was with Moses, so shall I be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." Solomon had almost as difficult a succession to fill as Joshua. It was no easy duty to take David's place, and to carry out his great design. But there was a way in which he might have been strengthened for the task. "If," said the Lord to him, "thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, *I will be with thee*, and build thee a sure house." And still, whatever be the peculiarities of our lot in life, the nature of the duties we have to discharge, the difficulties to contend with, the trials to bear, the temptations to meet, still it is the fulfilment of that most gracious promise, *I will be with thee*, which alone can bear us up, and bear us through. Let us rest more simply and entirely on it, trying, as we advance in life, to have more and more of the spirit of the Psalmist, as he looked out upon the future and said, "I

will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

IX.

The Ascension.*

There are ten appearances of our Saviour after his resurrection recorded in the New Testament. So many as five of them occurred on the day of the resurrection: those, namely, to Mary Magdalene, to the Galilean women,† to Peter, to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, to the ten apostles and others assembled in the evening within the upper chamber. The sixth appearance was to the eleven and the rest on the evening of the seventh day from that on which he rose from the dead. The seventh—spoken of by John as the *third* time that he showed himself, inasmuch as it was the third occasion upon which he had met with them collectively, or in any considerable number together—was to the seven disciples by the sea of Tiberias. The eighth was the

* Luke xxiv. 44–53; Acts i. 3–8. † See Appendix D.

great manifestation on the mountain side of Galilee. The ninth, of which we should have known nothing but for the simple record of it preserved in the fifteenth chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, was to James the brother of the Lord; and finally, the tenth, on the occasion of the ascension. There may have been other unrecorded appearances of our Lord. It is nowhere said in the Gospels or Epistles that there were none else besides the ones related therein. But the nature of the case, and the manner of the narrative, forces upon us the belief that if there were any such, they must have partaken of the character of the manifestation to James; having a private and personal, rather than a public object in view. But why, if his interviews with his followers were so few, his intercourse with them so brief, so broken, so reserved, did Jesus remain on earth so long? Why were so many as forty days of an existence such as his spent by him in this way? It may seem useless even to put a

question to which no satisfactory answer can be given, inasmuch as, beyond the mere statement that he afforded thereby many infallible proofs of his resurrection, nothing explicit is said in the Scriptures as to the particular object or design of this lingering of our Lord so long upon the earth. And yet it is scarcely possible for us to forget, or to fail in being struck by it, that this period of forty days was one which had already been signalized in the history of redemption; and looking at the other instances in which it meets our eye in the Scripture narrative, we are tempted to put the question, Was it as Moses was withdrawn from men, to spend these forty days in fasting and prayer on the Mount with God, as the fit and solemn preparation for the promulgation of the Law through his hands at Sinai? Was it as Elijah was carried away into the wilderness, to fast and pray there for forty days, to prepare him for his great work as the restorer of the Law in Israel? Was it as Jesus himself,

after his baptism, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to fast there forty days, and at the end to be tempted of the devil, to fit him for that earthly ministry which was to close in his death upon the cross? Was it even so that now, for another forty days, our Lord was detained on earth, as the suitable preface or prelude to his entrance upon that higher stage of the mediatorial work in which he is to sit upon the throne, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool?

Passing, however, from a topic which must remain shrouded in obscurity, let us take up the incidents of our Lord's parting interview with his apostles. They have returned from Galilee, and are now once more at Jerusalem. There might have been some specific instruction to that effect delivered in private to themselves, or communicated to them through James, which brought the disciples back from Galilee to Jerusalem. But we do not need to suppose that it was so, in order to account for the movement;

for let us remember that this period of forty days was immediately preceded by the great festival of the Passover, and followed by that of Pentecost, both of which required the presence of the apostles at Jerusalem. It was not till the first of them was over that they could well leave the Holy City, and so you find them remaining there for a week after the resurrection. And now the promised and appointed meeting in Galilee having taken place, the approach of the second festival naturally invited their return. However it came about, the fortieth day after the resurrection saw the eleven and their companions once more assembled at Jerusalem. Christ's former meetings with them there collectively had been in the evening, in the closed chamber, where they had assembled in secret for fear of the Jews. This last one, though we know not when or how it commenced, may have begun in the same supper chamber already hallowed by the former meetings, but it was obviously at an earlier hour, and took place in the

broad daylight. The first, or earlier part of it—that spent within the city—appears to have been devoted to the renewal and expansion of such instructions as he had delivered to the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus. We gather this from the 44th to the 47th verses of the 24th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. It is very natural to read these verses in immediate connexion with those which go before, and to regard them simply as a continuation of the narrative of what occurred at that meeting on the evening of the resurrection day. And so indeed, in common with the majority of readers, we were at first disposed to regard them. By reading on to the end of the chapter, however, you will at once perceive that the narrator, without any note or mark of time, has condensed into one short and continuous statement all that he had then to say about the period between the resurrection and the ascension; omitting so entirely all mention of any after day or after meetings, that if you had had nothing but

this last chapter of Luke to guide you, you might have imagined—indeed, could not well have thought anything else—that the ascension had taken place on the very evening of the resurrection day. The same narrative, however, Luke has, in the first chapter of the Acts, filled up, and broken down into its parts the brief and summary notice with which he had closed his Gospel. And it is when we compare what he says in the one writing with what he says in the other, that we become persuaded that the verses from the 44th downwards of the last chapter in his Gospel belong to and describe, not what happened in the evening interview on the day of the resurrection, but what happened in the last interview of all on the day of the ascension; for you will notice as common to the two accounts, the peremptory injunction laid upon the apostles, that they were not to leave Jerusalem till the promise of the Father had been ful filled, and the baptism of the Spirit had been conferred. Such an injunction would

not have been proper to the occasion of the first interview in the upper chamber. They were to leave Jerusalem, and in point of fact did leave it, after that meeting, to see the Lord in Galilee. According, however, to the account contained in the Acts of the Apostles, it was after the command had been given that they should not depart from Jerusalem that Jesus spake to them of their being witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth; an announcement which corresponds with that contained in the 47th and 48th verses of the chapter in the Gospel, leading us naturally to conclude that these verses relate to the final meeting on the ascension day. We must make a break somewhere in the chapter of the Gospel; and it seems, on the whole, much more natural and consistent to make it at the end of the 43d than at the 48th verse.

Adopting, then, this idea, we have the fact before us that, in the first instance

when he met with the eleven in the course of that day on which he was taken up into heaven, our Saviour occupied himself with showing them how needful it was that all things that had been written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms regarding him should be fulfilled; with showing them how exactly many of their ancient prophecies had met with their fulfilment in the manner and circumstances of his death; with showing them how it behoved him to suffer, and through suffering to reach the throne of that kingdom which he came to set up on the earth;—at once unfolding to them the Scriptures, and opening their minds to understand them. As on the first, so now on the last day of his being with them, this was the chosen theme on which he dwelt; this the lesson upon which a larger amount of pains and care were bestowed by our Lord after his resurrection than upon any other. What weight and worth does this attach to these Old Testament testimonies to his Messiahship!

what a sanction does it lend to our searching of their prophetic records, in the belief that we shall find much there pointing, in prophecy and type and figure, to the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

Our Lord's exposition of these Scriptures could not have been wholly in vain. The veil which had been upon the hearts of his apostles in their former reading of the prophecies must have been at least partially removed. Their notions of a Messiah coming only to conquer, only to restore and establish and extend the old Jewish theocracy, must have been materially altered and rectified. When, then, after all these expositions of their Master,—after all the fresh light he had thrown upon the true nature of his kingdom and the manner of its establishment, you find them coming to him and saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? it could scarcely be that, ignoring all they had

just heard, and clinging still to their first belief, they were inquiring about an immediate erection of that temporal and visible kingdom which had previously so engrossed their thoughts and hopes. Let us rather belive that, accepting all which Jesus had taught them, admitting now fully the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, their conceptions altered and elevated at once as to the kind of kingdom he was to set up, and the way in which that kingdom was to be established and advanced,—building upon these new foundations, their old spirit of curiosity found now a new object on which to fasten. They saw now the need there was that Jesus should have suffered all these things; but still there was a kingdom which, through these sufferings, he was to reach, a glory on which, when these were over, he was to enter. Still there lay within these prophecies, which their minds had now been opened to understand, many a wonderful announcement of the part which Israel was to take in the erection and consolida-

tion of the Redeemer's empire upon this earth. So much had already been accomplished by their Lord and Master. He had been wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities; it had pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief,—was he now instantly to see of the travail of his soul; to divide the portion with the great, the spoil with the strong? Were nations that knew not him to run unto him; was he to be exalted as Governor among the nations; were all the ends of the earth to remember and turn unto the Lord, all the kindreds of the nations to worship before him; was his law to go forth of Zion, and his word from Jerusalem; and were the nations, as it had been predicted they should do in the latter days, the days of the Messiah's reign, to be heard saying, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob?—Lord, they say to him, with some such thoughts floating vaguely through their minds, wilt thou at this time restore

again the kingdom to Israel? Jesus, in answering that question, does not blame, does not rebuke; says nothing that would imply that they were radically wrong in the hopes which they were cherishing; that there was no such kingdom as that they were asking about. Nay, rather, does he not assume that the kingdom was to be restored to Israel; that the question was only one as to time; that it was here, in their too eager haste and impatience, that the error of the disciples lay? "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power;" a somewhat different declaration from that which Jesus made when, speaking of the time of his own second advent, he said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of God," no, not even the Son in his character as the great prophet and revealer of the future to the Church, but the Father only. But he does not say that he himself was ignorant of the times and the seasons.

He only says that it was not for them, the disciples, to know them. They were among the secret things which the Father had reserved and kept within his own power, to reveal when and how and to whom he pleased. Would that these words of Jesus —among the last he ever uttered—had been sufficiently pondered by our prophetic interpreters in their pryings into the unknown future which lies before us. Curiosity as to that future is not unnatural. There are so many things to make us desire to see things otherwise and better ordered than they now are. There lie too on the pages of prophecy so many things which remain yet to be accomplished, such bright and glorious visions of a coming period of triumph for the truth, a coming reign of peace and virtue and piety upon this earth, that we are not disposed to quarrel much with those whose eyes are turned longingly upon a future out of whose pregnant bosom such great and glorious things are to emerge. But we are most imperatively bound to keep our curi-

osity here under that check which the hand of the Redeemer himself has laid upon it, and to remember that he has told us of many things which are yet to come to pass, not that we might be able to predict them, to specify beforehand the dates of their arrival, but that when they do come to pass we might believe.

But if that kind of knowledge which they were seeking for was denied to the disciples, another and better thing was to be given them instead. They were to receive power from on high to execute that great mission upon which they were to be sent forth; that mission was to consist in their proclaiming everywhere repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus; and beginning at Jerusalem as the centre, they were to go forth, not as prophets of the future, but as witnesses of the past, witnesses for Christ, to carry the glad tidings abroad through all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Three things are noticeable here:

1. The simplicity of the gospel message as originally promulgated by Christ himself. Repentance, a turning from all evil, a turning with true and penitent spirit to God; remission of sins, the covering of all past transgression by an act of grace on the part of God; the remission of sins, offered in the name of Jesus, coming only, but coming directly, immediately, fully, in and through the name of him who is the one all-prevalent Mediator between man and God;—such was the burden of that simple message which, in parting from them, Jesus committed to his disciples to make known over all the earth.

2. The wider and wider compass of that sphere over which this message was to be borne by them. Upon the universality of its embrace,—its being a message for all mankind, for men of every age and country, character and condition,—we have already, in our last lecture, commented; but let us not overlook the fact as pointing to the true order in which all evangelistic labours should

be prosecuted, that the apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, to go throughout all Judea, to penetrate Samaria with the glad tidings, and then to bear them on to the uttermost parts of the earth. Whatever else may have lain at the bottom of these instructions, this at least is apparent, that their own capital, their own country, their own kindred, their own immediate neighbours, were first to have the tender made to them. Are we wrong in interpreting the direction of our Saviour as implying that all Christian effort should be from the centre to the circumference; should be so directed as to fill the inner circles first,—the circles of our own heart, our own home, our own city, our own country; and that if, overlooking these, neglecting these, we busy ourselves among the broader, wider, outer circles, we are reversing the order and running counter to the directions of the Master whom we serve? I shall not venture here to say how much better I think it would be for ourselves and for others, for Christianity

and for the world, if, instead of embarking in enterprises which fascinate by the wideness of their scope, but upon which, just because of that wideness, so much labour is wasted, each man were to cultivate the little sphere which lies more immediately around him.

3. We notice the qualification for Christian work, the baptism of the Holy Spirit bestowing the needed power. The apostles had a great commission given, a great task assigned; the wide world set forth as the field of their future labours. But they were not as yet prepared to execute this commission, to take up this work. They were to wait in Jerusalem; to wait some days; do nothing but wait and pray and hope; a good and useful lesson in itself, subduing, restraining the spirit of eager and impatient self-confidence—a lesson which is still in force; that pause, that period of inaction, those ten days of stillness between the day of the ascension and the day of Pentecost, as full of instruction still to us as of benefit

originally to the disciples. And when the baptism of fire at last was given, the wanting element was supplied, said here by Christ himself to be *power:* "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Not knowledge so much was wanted but power; a firmer grasp of truth already known; a stronger, deeper, steadier attachment to a Saviour already loved; conviction, affection ripened into abiding, controlling, enduring principle of action; power to be, to do, to suffer. Is not that the very thing which in religion we all most need; the very thing we feel we cannot ourselves attain; the very thing which it requires the baptism of a heavenly influence to bestow?

But let us follow Jesus to the mount called Olivet. His closing counsels given,

he leads his disciples out of the city. Did they, in open day, pass along through the streets of Jerusalem? If they did, how many wondering eyes would rest upon the well-known group of Galilean fishermen; how many wondering eyes would fix upon the leader of that group—the Jesus of Nazareth, whom six weeks before they had seen hanging upon the cross at Calvary. Little heeding the looks which they attract, they pass through the city gate. They are now on a well-known track; they cross the Kedron; they approach Gethsemane. We lose sight of them amid the deep shadows of these olive-trees. Has Jesus paused for a moment to look, for the last time, with those human eyes of his, upon the sacred spot where he cast himself on the night of his great agony, upon the ground? Once more they emerge; they climb the hill-side; they cross its summit; they are approaching Bethany. He stops; they gather round. He looks upon them; he lifts his hands; he begins to bless them. What love un-

utterable in that parting look; what untold riches in that blessing! His hands are up lifted; his lips are engaged in blessing, when slowly he begins to rise: earth has lost her power to keep; the waiting, up-drawing heavens claim him as their own. An attraction stronger than our globe is on him, and declares its power. He rises; but still as he floats upward through the yielding air, his eyes are bent on these up-looking men; his arms are stretched over them in the attitude of benediction, his voice is heard dying away in blessings as he ascends. Awe-struck, in silence they follow him with straining eye-balls, as his body lessens to sight, in its retreat upward into that deep blue, till the commissioned cloud enfolds, cuts off all further vision, and closes the earthly and sensible communion between Jesus and his disciples. That cloudy chariot bore him away, till he was "received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God."

How simple, yet how sublime, how pathetic this parting! No disturbance of the

clements, no chariot of fire, no escort of angels; nothing to disturb or distract the little company from whom he parts; nothing to the very last to break in upon that close and brotherly communion, which is continued as long as looking eye and listening ear can keep it up. But who shall tell us, when these earthly links were broken, and that cloud carried him to the farthest point in which cloud could form or float, and left him there; who shall tell us what happened above, beyond, on the way to the throne; in what new form of glory, by what swift flight, attended by what angel escort, accompanied by what burst of angelic praise, that throne of the universe was reached? Our straining eyes, we too would turn upward to those heavens which received him, and wonder at the reception which awaited him there, till on our ears there falls that gentle rebuke, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" 'Think not with eyes like yours to pierce that cloud which hides the world of spirits from mental vision. Enough for

you to know that this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.'

This mild rebuke was given to the men of Galilee upon the mountain top by two men in white apparel, who stood beside them, their presence unnoted till their words had broken the deep silence, and drawn upon themselves that gaze hitherto directed towards heaven, but which had now nothing above on which to rest; two angels, perhaps the two who had watched and waited by the empty sepulchre; one of them the same who in the hour of his great agony had been sent to strengthen the sinking Saviour in the Garden, now stationed here at Olivet to soften, as it were, to the disciples the sorrow of this parting, to turn that sorrow into joy. But how at that moment, when they were discharging this kindly but humble office, were the heavenly host engaged? Surely, if at the emerging out of chaos of this beautiful and orderly creation, those sons of God chanted together the new world's birthday hymn; surely, if

in that innumerable host above the plains of Bethlehem, a great multitude of them celebrated, in notes of triumph, a still better and more glorious birth—the entire company of the heavenly host must have struck their harps to the fullest, noblest, richest anthem that ever they gave forth, as the great Son of God, the Saviour of mankind —his earthly sorrows over, his victories over Satan, sin, and death complete—sat down that day with the Father on his throne, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. Did these two angels who were left behind on earth, who had this humbler task assigned them, feel at all as if theirs were a lower, meaner service? No, they had too much of the spirit of Him who had for forty days kept that throne waiting to which he had now ascended, that he might tabernacle still a little longer with the children of men; nor were they ignorant of that word of his, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least

of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me."

"Why gaze ye up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." This is not a final departure of this Jesus from the world he came to save. That was not the last look the earth was ever to get of him that you got of him as the clouds covered him from your view. He is to come again; to come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. But for that, perhaps the disciples might have returned to Jerusalem with sad and downcast spirits, as those from whose head their Master had been for ever taken away. As it was, they returned, we are told, with great joy; the sorrow of the departure swallowed up in the hope of the speedy return. So vivid, indeed, was the expectation cherished by the first Christians of the second advent of the Lord, that it needed to be chastened and restrained. They required to have their hearts directed into a patient waiting for that coming.

is very different with us. We require to have that faith quickened and stimulated, which they needed to have chastened and restrained. It is more with wonder than with great joy that we return from witnessing the ascension of our Lord. But let us remember that though the heavens have received him, it is not to keep him there apart for ever from this world. He himself cherishes no such feeling of retirement and separation now that he has ascended up on high. I have spoken to you of his last words of blessing which fell audibly upon fleshly ears. But what are the very last words that in vision he uttered: "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly." Our crowned Saviour waits; with eager expectancy waits the coming of the day when his presence shall be again revealed among us. It may seem slow to us, that evolution of the ages which is preparing all things for his approach. But with him who says, I come quickly, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; and as

soon as the curtain shall drop on the last act of that great drama of which this earth is now the theatre, then, quick as love and power can carry him, shall the same Jesus be here again on earth,—coming in like manner as these men of Galilee saw him go up to heaven. Are we waiting for that coming, longing for that coming, hastening to that coming? Are we ready, as he says to us, "Behold, I come quickly," to add as our response, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.—P. 18.

As so closely connected with the subject of our Lord's Resurrection, the author ventures to present to the reader the following extracts from an unpublished course of Lectures on the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

"Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."—1 Cor. xv. 12–20.

St. Paul had learned that there were some among the Corinthian converts to Christianity who affirmed that there was to be no resurrection of the dead. A belief in that resurrection has so long, so universally, and so strongly been established in the breasts of all

calling themselves by the Christian name,—it is so thoroughly recognised as an integral part of the Christian faith, that we find some difficulty in conceiving that at any time any who professed themselves to be believers in Christ should have doubted or denied it. Let us remember, however, that even among the Jews, up to the time of the resurrection of our Lord himself, the doctrine of the future general resurrection of the dead had not been revealed with such plainness as to prevent the whole sect of the Sadducees from openly denying it. They accepted the Mosaic revelation; their title to be regarded as holders of the Jewish faith was not questioned; and yet they repudiated the belief that the dead were to rise again. Outside Judea the notion of a future resurrection of all the dead was so novel and so startling, that we are not to wonder that a difficulty should have been felt in admitting, or a disposition displayed—even by those who otherwise lent a favorable ear to the first teachings of Christianity—to reject it. In that broad Gentile world which the first evangelists of the Cross invaded and sought to win over to Christianity, there were two elements that rose up in strong antagonism to the idea of the resurrection of the dead. There was the materialistic Epicurean form of infidelity—twin-sister of the Sadducean spirit among the Jews—which refused to listen to anything beyond what sense or conscious-

ness made known. This spirit was rife at Athens. Paul had already found it there. The men of Athens listened to him patiently enough for a time, till he spake of the resurrection of the dead, when they turned them mockingly and impatiently away: the very notion of a future embodiment of that spirit, which at death passed they knew not whither or into what, being far too gross and too tangible for them to receive. Then there was another and very opposite spirit, begotten in the school of Oriental speculation, with which the doctrine of the resurrection came into the sharpest and most direct collision,—the spirit of those teachers of the Gnostic philosophy, who asserted that the source of all evil lay in matter; the source of all sin in the soul's connexion with the body. With them, liberation from the body was emancipation from all evil; reunion with the body would be a reduction of the soul once more into the bondage of corruption. Many who cherished this deep abhorrence of matter joined the Christian ranks, and struggled hard to retain as much as they could of their old impressions and beliefs in conjunction with their new faith in Jesus Christ. Of such, in all likelihood, were Hymeneus and Philetus, referred to by Paul some years afterwards in his Second Epistle to Timothy, as having erred concerning the faith, saying that the resurrection was past already. Seeking to spiritualize everything, they said that the only

resurrection was the regeneration of the soul, the moral renewal of the inner man of the heart, which was already over with all who were made new men in Jesus Christ.

Of these three leavens—the Jewish Sadducean, the Greek Epicurean, or the Oriental Gnostic—it is impossible now to tell which it was that had infected at so early a period the Church of Corinth. We have only the fact before us, that there were some within that Church who said that there was to be no resurrection of the dead. Otherwise they had received in all its simplicity and in all its fulness the gospel that Paul taught; he had not to complain of them as having ever felt or expressed any doubt as to that eternal life held out to them in Christ, neither had they questioned the fact of Christ's own resurrection as an incident in his history that had often been recounted to them. But, animated by one or other of the tendencies that have been already alluded to, they had put away from them a belief in the general resurrection of the dead. They saw and felt no inconsistency in doing so. They thought that they could be as good Christians as ever, and yet give up that one belief. They did not see how unbelief on that one topic would, if admitted and cherished, spread itself around; how it went to sap and undermine the entire fabric of Christianity, to overturn the very trust and hope that they themselves

were clinging to. To convince them of all this, and by working such conviction to eradicate the rising error, is the main object of the apostle in the 15th chapter of the Epistle. . .

You have a good specimen in the verses immediately before us of that rapid, condensed, impassioned kind of reasoning in which Paul so frequently indulges. There were some at Corinth, he had been informed, who, having made public profession of their faith in Christ, were nevertheless disposed to deny that there should be a resurrection of the dead. At once the incompatibility of the general faith with the particular denial rises before the apostle's thoughts. This incompatibility he hastens to expose. Have they thought—these deniers of a resurrection from the dead—of all which that denial fairly and directly involves? Have they thought of the inconsistencies, the absurdities, the incredibilities, that by necessity and immediate implication flow out of it? These he presses on their regard, not in the way of laboured or lengthened argument, but in brief emphatic declarations, well fitted to confound as well as to convince,—to stir the conscience and the heart too, as by the voice of a trumpet. I am very conscious how much such a series of short, terse statements must suffer by any attempt to expand them. But as some accidental benefits may perhaps accompany the attempt, let us take up in order the fatal consequences

charged here by Paul upon a denial of the resurrection of the dead.

Ver. 13.—"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen."* The resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ are, in the apostle's judgment, so inseparably connected, that they must stand and fall together. If you believe one, you must believe both; if you reject one, you must reject both. But how is this? What is the link of connexion between the two events that necessitates this common acceptance or common rejection of them both? What is it that makes it anything like a direct and inevitable conclusion, from the dead not rising, that Christ had not risen? One can readily enough see how that, if the resurrection of the dead generally were denied upon the ground of its strangeness, its undesirableness, its alleged impossibility, then it must be denied in every instance; to be consistent, you must carry your denial round the whole circle of humanity, and take in the man Christ Jesus with all the rest. More than this, however, seems to be indicated here. The apostle points to some other more hidden nexus or bond of union between the two events that he so knits together, than that of their being alike mysterious in their character, alike difficult of accomplishment. As serving to bring out to view what that nexus is, let us notice,

* Ver. 16.—"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised."

that it is not of the resurrection of all the dead promiscuously,—it is of the resurrection of believers; it is of that resurrection unto life which involves the deliverance of the soul at death from all the fruits and consequences of its transgressions, and its reunion afterwards with the body from which it was to suffer a temporary separation; it is of that kind of resurrection, and of it exclusively, that the apostle speaks. It was to obtain and secure for all true believers in him the benefits and blessedness of such a resurrection, that Christ both died and rose and revived. He rose from the sepulchre on their account. He rose, not as an isolated member of the human family, to whom it might be given to burst the barriers of the tomb, whilst all the others remained within its hold. Were no other connexion looked at as existing between Christ and those who were to rise again, than that of their being joint partakers of the same human nature, it would be difficult to perceive any great force in the argument, that if they were not to rise, he could not have risen. There seems no such tie existing between the entire membership of the human family, as to shut out the possibility that there might have been that one solitary instance of a resurrection from the dead. But bring in the idea of a vital union between Christ and his own; bring in the idea that he is the Resurrection and the Life in this sense, that he that believeth in him,

though he were dead, yet shall he rise again, that whosoever liveth by believing in him shall never die; bring in the idea that Jesus rose not from the dead in his individual capacity, but as the head and representative of all those whom he was to redeem from death and ransom from the power of the grave, —and then it is that a meaning and a force is given to the declaration, "If *they* rise not, then is he not risen." His resurrection, in its true significance, in its great design, never can have taken place if it draw not that other resurrection of all his people in its train.

2. Ver. 14.—But "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." It is an idle, empty tale, this gospel that we have been preaching. You not only deprive it of its closing convincing evidence, you take out of it its very pith and morrow, if you cast away from you the truth that Jesus rose again from the dead; for, is it not upon that rising of his to God's right hand, as the accepted and prevailing Mediator, that faith builds its hope of pardon and acceptance before God? Had our gospel stopped here, that Christ died for our sins; had we had nothing more to tell you, than that he sank beneath the load of our iniquities that pressed him down to death,—where were there evidence to rebut the allegation that beneath that load he still was lying; where the proof that that death of his for our trans-

gressions, in the Father's judgment was sufficient, and had by him been accepted as such? It is that rising again of the great Sin-bearer; his triumphant enthronement by the side of his Father in heaven, which proclaims the sacrifice complete, the atonement adequate. It is because it embraces this within the glad tidings that it proclaims, that this gospel which we preach is indeed a gospel whereon all may securely stand, and by which the very chief of sinners may be saved. Vain, all-powerless as an instrument of comfort would the gospel be, if it pointed only to the death and the burial, the shrouded cross and the sealed sepulchre, leaving the body of the Crucified within that grave wherein man had never lain before, but leaving it to share the common fate of all the buried inmates of the tomb. And as vain in that case would be your faith as was our preaching; vain, because wanting that solid substantial basis to rest upon, which the resurrection of Christ supplies. Take that foundation from under it, and then see how unsettled and insecure your faith in Christ—your faith in him as the Redeemer of the lost, the Saviour of your soul—would be.

Ver. 15.—"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not, if so be that the dead rise not." False witnesses; not mistaken, deceived witnesses, but false witnesses, testifiers to

that which was not true, and testifiers to its being true, themselves knowing it to be false. There was here, as to that fact of the resurrection, no room for mistake. It was a fact or it was a falsehood. Peter, James, the Twelve, the Five Hundred, all said that they had seen the Lord; that he had spoken with them, ate with them, showed them his hands and his side—been at pains to prove to them that it was no shadowy form of their own imagination, that it was his true and real self, emerged from Joseph's sepulchre, that they looked upon. Either all that was true, or they were wilful, intentional deceivers, trying to palm a falsehood upon the world. Twenty years had passed since the alleged event had happened. These twenty years had sifted that testimony, had searched it more thoroughly than any personal cross-examination, however rigorous. The witnesses were numerous enough, scattered enough, independent enough; they had repeated their evidence often enough, and in circumstances varied enough to have brought out any inconsistency, to have detected any attempted collusion. Had any signs or token of imposition ever been discovered in any of them? Could any motive for imposture be conceived? What had they made of it, what were they ever likely to make of it, by proclaiming and repeating it, that Jesus had risen from the grave?

Yea, and among these men branded thus as false

witnesses, if Christ did not really rise, Paul himself must be reckoned. That *he* should ever have such a brand affixed to him, that he should ever once be thought of as an impostor, a deceiver; is there not something in the very manner of Paul's speech here, that tells us how monstrous to himself, and surely as incredible to others, the very supposition seemed? So far as it is or can be a mere matter of human testimony, we would be willing to peril the whole fate of Christianity upon the evidence of that one witness, Paul; that evidence as it lies before us in his letters written at different times, from different places, in different circumstances, to different persons; so frank, so full, so overflowing, the whole thought, the whole heart of the man, so unrestrainedly poured forth. Read these letters, and say, is it possible that you could have got a man more thoroughly qualified, by his intelligence and his clear-sightedness, and early acquaintance both with the Jewish and Gentile faiths, to decide upon the matter,—his birth, his education, his position, his earthly prospects, all tending to create a bias against and not in favour of the new faith? How are you to account for it, that there upon the spot; there within so short a time after the crucifixion of our Lord; there, with every means lying open to him of examining into the truth of all the facts and miracles of our Lord's history, such a man became a convert to Christianity? We have

his own account of that conversion, an account which if we accept as true determines the whole matter; but even setting that account aside, look at the after-life and labours, toils and sufferings of this man, crowned at last with the martyr's death. How are we to account for them on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity? If anything that the other apostles testified as to the facts of the Saviour's life had been false, Paul must have found it out; and had he found it out, would he not have been the first and the loudest in proclaiming it? If ever there was an honest seeker after the truth; if ever there was an ardent lover of the truth; if ever there was a devoted adherent to the truth, a man who would do all and dare all to get at it, and would bear all and sacrifice all rather than part with or deny it,—that man was Paul. Can any one read his Epistles with the shadow of a doubt as to his entire truthfulness, earnestness, integrity of thought and purpose? Paul a false witness! do we not now scout the very idea of it as promptly and almost as indignantly as, eighteen hundred years ago, when he first penned the 15th verse of this chapter, Paul scouted it himself.

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Those sins of yours Jesus took upon him, made them virtually his own, bare them in his own body on the tree. It was for those sins he died; died that he might redeem or deliver

you from all their bitter fruits, that he might ransom you from the power of the grave; but if he have not risen, if death still hold him in its stiff and unrelaxed embrace, if the grave still keep in its stern custody that body which was wounded for your transgressions,—then, brethren, the sting has not been taken from the last enemy, the victory has not been wrested from the grave, that death of Christ has failed in realizing its predicted issue. Instead of triumphing in your stead and on your behalf over death, death has triumphed over him, leaving thus your deliverance unaccomplished. And if so, then are ye yet in your sins; the whole weight of their guilt still lieth upon you; the whole burden of their penalty remains yet to be borne. It is a strange, let us even say, an incredible or impossible hypothesis that Paul puts, that Christ should have taken on him our sins, yet sunk beneath the burden thus voluntarily assumed; but do not the very form in which that hypothesis is here presented, and the conclusion drawn from the temporary assumption of its truth, —namely, that in that case these Corinthian believers would still be in their sins,—do they not necessarily enfold within them the great truth that Christ's death was designed to be a vicarious atoning sacrifice whereby the whole guilt of all those sins that we truly repent of, and truly lay by faith on him, was to be lifted off us, removed by him? Refuse that charac-

ter to the Saviour's death, and what meaning do you leave to the language, what force to the reasoning that the apostle here employs?

The whole passage, indeed, now before us is stripped (it seems to me) of significance, of coherence, of all argumentative weight and power, if such a sacrificial, a sin-bearing character, be not attached to that great decease accomplished at Jerusalem. You may convince yourselves of this by trying how the passage would read, how the inferences it contains would hold upon any view of the death of our Redeemer which rejects the idea of a true and sufficient atonement having been thereby made for the sins of the world.

Paul's object is to overset the unbelief in the resurrection of the dead, by heaping one upon another the conclusions to which, if fully and legitimately carried out, that unbelief would lead. It would involve, in the first instance, a rejection of the resurrection of Christ himself, and the denial of that resurrection would in its turn lead us to the conclusion that those who had been looking to the Saviour's death for the remission of their sins had been looking in vain, that they were yet in their sins. But a still further and still sadder inference would follow,—"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Your dead in Christ, your fathers, your brethren, who have fallen asleep resting for the

forgiveness of their sins in the completed and accepted sacrifice,—What of them, what of their present state, what of their eternal destiny, if Jesus have not risen from the grave? For them there would be no future resurrection of the body. That *you*, ye deniers of all such resurrection, may deem no loss, as you desire it not for yourselves; neither may it pain you to think that your departed friends shall not share in it. But, have you reflected upon this, that if Jesus be not raised, and if that leave you, the living who are trusting in him, with your sins still on you, their guilt uncancelled,—it leaves them, the dead, with their sins still on them in that world into which they have passed; it leaves them lost, it consigns them to perdition, the second death has come upon them, and from it who shall deliver? Such seems to have been the train of thought in the apostle's mind, binding the 17th and 18th verses together. The imagined perishing at last of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, that Paul here has for the moment in his eye, could not have been their annihilation at death, their ceasing then to exist; for how in any possible way of conceiving of it or employing it, could the fact that Christ had not risen from the tomb be made to draw after it the conclusion that those who had died trusting in the efficacy of his atoning death, at that death ceased altogether and for ever to have any existence? It is a far

worse, far darker fate than that of annihilation, that the apostle points to as awaiting those who though they had fallen asleep in Jesus, yet if he had not risen are yet in their sins even when they so died. Were the Corinthians then ready to harbour or give any countenance to speculations and incredulities which, driven to their last logical issues, would represent their departed brethren as going down into the dark valley with a lie in their right hand, and as awakers on the other side of death to the terrible consciousness that they had believed in vain?

And truly, adds the apostle, if it be in this life only that we have hope in Christ, if that hope be doomed at death to perish, then we of all men are most miserable. Not that the apostle is here calmly instituting a comparison between himself and his brother believers in Christ on the one hand, and the rest of mankind on the other, and as the result of such comparison, declaring that during this present life he and they were unhappier men than the others, the only thing to mitigate their greater misery the hope they had in Jesus. We may say it boldly, that even though it should turn out hereafter that all his present faith and hope in Christ were vain, the true Christian man is not more miserable, but all the happier, for his faith and hope. We do not regard the utterance of the 19th verse as a didactic statement to be logically analysed by us, but as a passion-

ate exclamation, bursting from the apostle's lips, on the imagination starting up before his thoughts, that for him no Saviour had risen triumphant from the grave, for him no satisfying atonement had been offered up on Calvary, that he and his fellow-believers were yet in their sins, that all of them must perish. If that be so; if, says he, after all that I have seen and felt of my great sinfulness before God, —of my need of a Redeemer,—of the power and preciousness of the death of Christ,—if after all that I have given up, all that I have done and suffered for him whom I have counted to be my resurrection and my life,—you tell me now that it is in this life only that my hope of acceptance and of the divine favour through him can stand, then truly of all men I am the most miserable. From that great hope fling me down into that great despair, and you will not find a man on earth so miserable as I. It lightened my labours; it comforted my griefs; it bore me through all my conflicts. I was thrice beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night I was in the deep; but in all kinds of perils, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger, thirst and watchings, in fastings, in cold, in nakedness, so brightly shone that hope within my soul, that I could look back on twenty years so spent, filled up above all common measure with all sorts of suffering, and say, Our l ght affliction which is but for a moment,

worketh out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; for I reckoned that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that was to be revealed. But now, cut away from me that hope, fling me a sinful man adrift on those troubled waters, quench all my lights, put out that opening glory beyond the grave,—no cross for me to steer by, no heavenly eternal rest to reach,—in all the wide ocean was ever mariner in such a wretched plight?

But blessed be God, that cannot be done! Christ hath risen; it is not in this life only we have hope in him. Instead of being of all men the most miserable, of all men we are the most blessed. Christ hath risen, and that rising of our Lord seals our hope in him as sure, and points us to the heavenly place that he has entered, as to the regions where in an eternity of blessedness that hope shall be fulfilled. Christ hath risen; then they also which have fallen asleep in him have not perished. He was dead, but he is alive again, and they live witl him for evermore. Christ hath risen, and ye are no longer in your sins. He has taken them, he has atoned for them, he has buried them far out of sight and reach of the avenger; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed them from you. Christ hath risen; and in rising left behind the pledge and token that to them that are in him there is and shall be no

condemnation; for who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Lord is risen indeed: such we are told were the joy-inspiring words with which each Lord's-day morning, as they met for worship, the early Christians were wont to salute one another. And when we count over, as brought out in this wonderful chapter, all the benefits and blessings the rising of the Lord secured, could they, we ask ourselves, have fixed upon a fitter phrase to express at once how rich their heritage, how full their joy, how bright their hope, how firm the foundation of their trust?

Ver. 20.—Assume for the moment—so had the apostle put it in the preceding verses—that Christ has not risen from the dead: what would be the issue? An empty preaching, an empty faith, an empty gospel, out of them their very core and substance taken; the living left in their sin, the dead left to perish. Dark and dismal conclusions these; but conclusions to which one who otherwise is a believer in Christ is shut up, if he let go his hold of that great central fact—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But now, continues the apostle, take hold of that great fact; grasp it firmly as one of the best substantiated events in this world's past history, and then see what opposite conclusions—as bright and

comforting, as the others were dark and dismal—follow from a belief in that event. That it involves the certain, final, and glorious resurrection into life of all those found in him,—this is what the apostle proceeds so distinctly and emphatically to declare.

I shall not trouble you with any speculations; still less shall I offer you any dogmatic deliverance upon the question how far the resurrection of the dead generally is a fruit or consequence of the resurrection of Christ. There are some who tell us that the general resurrection of the dead is no part of the remedial or mediatorial economy; is in no sense the result of the interposition of a Redeemer; that if Christ had not come at all, there would have been a general resurrection of the dead, notwithstanding,—the raising up of all to receive in the body the sentence of the second death. There are others who tell us that the original curse was a curse of death on the whole man, and that this curse, so long as it lay unrepealed, could not allow of the body's resurrection; that without Christ, and apart from the redemption of our nature effected by his death, there would and could have been no resurrection; that if there had been no interposition on behalf of the fallen, whatever had become of the souls of men their bodies must have remained under the tyranny of death. There is a link, they say, which unites Christ with every individual of the vast family of

man, and that it is in virtue of this link, and of it alone, that the graves of earth shall, at the last day, yield up their dead.

It would not be difficult to suggest considerations furnished upon general conceptions of the nature and designs of the mediatorial economy, which might seem to lend a strong support to one or the other of these two views, and it would be still less difficult, perhaps, to suggest difficulties which press upon them both.

But are we asked or bound to make our choice between them? Are the materials in our hands to come to any positive conclusion here? Is it of any practical moment to us to be able definitely to say what would have happened to the inhabitants of this earth, had no Saviour come, no redemption been wrought out? Men who think they so thoroughly understand the principles of the Divine government, the plans and purposes of the Eternal, as to be able to determine what, in such an imagined state of things, should have been the result, may pronounce their verdict; but for ourselves, we are content, on this as on so many other points, to remain in ignorance or in doubt; confessing that, however clear the light may be which the Scriptures throw upon our present duty and our future destiny, as things now are, it does not seem to us sufficient, nor do we think it was ever meant, to let us so far into the

secret counsels of the Most High as to enable us to decide upon such questions as the one now referred to.

It might, indeed, at first sight, appear that the verses which are now before us, deal with that very matter of the connexion between the resurrection of our Lord and the general resurrection of the dead. The structure, however, of the entire argument of this chapter; the link by which its reasonings are bound together; its whole drift and issue, tell us that it is with the resurrection of believers, and with it exclusively, that Paul is dealing, and even here, in these verses, however general be the terms that sometimes meet us, we shall find, as we unfold their meaning, that the same holds true.

But now is Christ risen, risen as the first-fruits of them that sleep. The relation in which his resurrection stands to that of all his people, is like to that in which the first ripe grain, the first ripe fruits of autumn, stands to that whole harvest of which they form a part, and of which they furnish an earnest. You bind up that first cut sheaf of yellow corn, you pluck those first ripe grapes or olives from these fruit-laden branches, and as you do so you count with confidence, trusting in the stability of the laws of nature, that the reaping process will go on, and the broad fields and vineyards of the land will yield up their rich harvest stores. You see the Saviour

rise, and in that rising you behold the pledge and promise of the rising of all who sleep in him; the resurrection of the entire body of his redeemed is that great harvest-home of which his rising from the dead is the first-fruits; and trusting in the stability of those laws by which the moral and spiritual government of the world is carried on, you count upon it with confidence that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up them also with him. In truth, the pledge or promise is in this latter case the more secure. Such a thing might happen in nature as there being first-fruits with no harvest following; those genial influences of light and warmth beneath which the fields gradually ripen, might at least be so far interfered with or checked that the promise of the first-fruits, if not utterly broken, might yet be but imperfectly fulfilled. Not so with the processes of ripening into that great spiritual harvest; they certainly shall go on; no process of nature more uniform or more inviolate than that by which the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides for, embraces, and secures the resurrection of all his followers.

Perhaps in using the term "first-fruits" here the apostle had in his eye that Jewish ordinance. "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the

Lord, to be accepted for you; on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." Before this offering of the first-fruits, no crop of the land could be reaped; it must not be touched, nor turned to use till it was all first consecrated by this presentation of the first-fruits by the priest within the temple, before the altar. And this presentation was to take place on the second day of unleavened bread, the day after the Sabbath, the very day of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus it was that in that old rite of Judaism there passed before the eye a symbolic representation of another and higher offering, that made by our great High Priest when, within the holy place not made with hands, he presented himself before the throne, the first-fruits of the dead, an offering accepted by the Lord, for all his people, consecrating that buried dust of theirs as dear in the Lord's sight to be quickened in due time, and gathered in to be laid up in the heavenly garner.

APPENDIX B.—P. 61.

It is interesting to compare the nine different appearances of our Lord after his resurrection mentioned in the Gospels, with the six alluded to by St. Paul in the following verses :—

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."—1 Cor. xv. 3–8.

We have here the earliest written account of the resurrection of Christ, coming from the pen of the apostle of the Gentiles between twenty and thirty years after the date of the event. That account derives an additional interest from its forming part of the evidence direct and indirect furnished by the writings of St. Paul as to the facts of the gospel narrative. As compared with other witnesses to the truth of these facts, he assumes a separate and inde-

pendent position, declaring that he had himself seen the Lord and derived his knowledge of his history by direct revelation from himself.*

Of the six appearances of our Lord to which he refers, we can identify four with one or other of those recorded in the Gospels. As he appears to place them in the order of time, the first two which he mentions, those to Cephas and to the twelve, we may regard as the same with two of the five mentioned by the evangelists as having occurred on the day of the resurrection. The other three of these five, to Mary, to the women, and to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, we may either suppose that he was not informed of, or that, knowing them, he passed them by, as happening to persons of comparatively little note and less available for the object he had in view. The appearance to above five hundred at once, we identify with the one on the Galilean mountain side. There are still two, however, of those referred to by the apostle, of which no trace is to be found in the gospel narrative—that to James and that to himself. The latter could not be alluded to in that narrative, which had nothing to do with St. Paul's life and labours; but the omission of all reference to the former is sufficient to convince us

* See his account of the institution of the Supper, of which he says, "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

that it was not the design of the evangelists to narrate every incident in their Master's history; but such only as Divine wisdom directed them to select and put on record for the instruction of the Church.

APPENDIX C.—P. 214.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two corporate seals by which the Church signifies and authenticates entrance into and continued membership in her communion. It is mainly by the use of these that she preserves an outward and definite form as a distinct and separate society. They have served age after age to mark her off as a chartered corporation, having rules of her own, bonds of union of her own, objects of pursuit of her own, which distinguish her from all human institutions, proclaiming her heavenly birth and foretelling her heavenly destiny. But these seals are in themselves significant. A corporation seal bears generally some emblem or motto graven on it descriptive of the character and object of the institution. And the seals of the great Christian Institute have inscriptions on them rich in meaning; which, interpreted aright, tell us what the chief truths are which the Church was appointed to guard and propagate, and what the chief ends are which she was set apart to realize. There stand out pictorially represented here the great leading instruments put by their divine founder into the Church's hands, and the great leading results which by the use

of these instruments she is to aim at and realize. Both the Christian sacraments are confessedly and conspicuously symbolic, that is, in each of them certain visible material emblems are used, to represent one or more of the great facts and truths of Christianity. In conveying his will to us, in seeking to impress the truth upon us, God has not confined himself to words—to mere verbal representation. In the earliest ages, whilst the world was yet in its rude infancy, easily affected, and of course easily seduced, by what told at once and powerfully on the senses, large use was made by the Divine Being of signs and symbols. In a picture alphabet no inconsiderable portion of the Mosaic revelation was written; nor has the charm of its picturesque expressiveness expired. Still it is our delight to go back to those ancient times, and study those ancient characters. Large profit too as well as large pleasure attends the task. Who has not felt his faith in Christ grow clearer, his devotion to Christ grow deeper, as he took his place in thought beside the altar on the great day of atonement, and saw the shedding of the blood, and the High Priest kindle at the altar fire the incense, and felt the power of the solitude and the silence in midst of which the one representative of the great Congregation paced with solemn step across the space that separated the altar of burnt-offering from the tabernacle, entered the sacred

building, passed by the shewbread table, lifted the veil, was hid in the darkness, stood before the ark, sprinkled with blood the mercy-seat, and bowed before that strangely beautiful and lambent light by which the gracious presence of the God of Israel was symbolized? In the Christian dispensation but little use is made of the symbolic method. That old scaffolding well nigh removed, the truth as it is in Jesus appears in its naked simplicity and grandeur, reposing upon its own firm foundations. It is but a slight help that it borrows from the senses. It addresses itself directly to the understanding, the conscience, the heart of man; of man as he has been found in all ages, in all countries, in all conditions of slavery and freedom, of poverty and riches, of barbarism or refinement. Compare the Christianity of the New Testament with any other religion that has had a strong hold upon our race, and we shall find that it stands distinguished from them all, by its very slender employment of that species of instrumentality which tells upon the senses and the imagination. In the original institution, as it came out of the hands of its divine founder, there are only in fact these two rites, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which partake of that character, and even of them we have to say that though taking advantage of our susceptibility to be impressed more vividly through the eye than through the ear, there is nothing in

them either to dazzle the rude eye or captivate the cultivated imagination. True to her high character, Christianity, even in stooping to take up the implement by which superstition has led her millions captive, takes it up in its very simplest form, and uses it, to instruct rather than to dazzle.

Has the world ever witnessed religious rites which had less in them fitted to attract the carnal eye than the first baptisms of Christianity, effected with few conveniences and little or no preparation; or than the simple supper in the humble apartment at which the twelve sat down to break the bread and to drink the wine of an ordinary meal? We shall presently indeed see that what these Christian sacraments want of what we may call pictorial power is more than made up by the rich, full, spiritual meaning, which lies condensed in them. The naked, some would even say, the severe simplicity which characterized them at their first institution, it has been attempted to cover over and supplement; and in course of ages what a mass of superadded drapery has been gathered round them! Look at High Mass as celebrated in a Roman Catholic cathedral—the mitred bishop robed in richest embroidered silks, the varied yet still gorgeous dresses of the priesthood marshalled round him, the evolutions without end, the marchings, the bowings, the crossings, the chantings—the dumb yet brilliant show all going on within

the railed enclosure, without one thing addressed, except through the eye, to the multitude without,—look and wonder that ever such a vast ornate superstructure could have been raised upon that incident which occurred eighteen hundred years ago in an upper chamber at Jerusalem.

Before, however, we proceed to read off the true symbolic meaning of the Sacraments, let us notice that there is still another service beyond that of throwing a fresh attractiveness over them, which the enshrining of spiritual truths in outward and sensible signs effects. Truths treated in this way exist, not only in a more expressive, but in a more enduring form than it left to be transmitted either by written record, or by oral tradition. They are better protected from the influence of time and change. They have greater tenacity of life, as is witnessed in the descent of many a picturesque old custom or habit from times as to which history and even tradition is silent. What, then, were those truths of his religion which Christ selected out of all the rest, to confer upon them the exclusive privilege of being clothed with the symbolic vest and covered with the symbolic shield? In selecting them, would He not fix on those whose superior importance entitled them to that distinction? In making and fashioning the outward frames within which these truths were to be permanently enshrined, would not those be

adopted which, of themselves and with least aid from an interpreter, spoke out their own meaning; for, if destitute of such a natural language of their own, they could but ill fulfil the object of their employment? Let us contemplate, then, for a few moments, these two sacraments of Christianity, and study their symbolic meaning—suffering them, without let or hindrance, to tell that meaning of themselves, and not imposing on them any preconceived meaning of our own. Dealt with in this way, the first thoughtful glance that we cast upon these sacraments satisfies us that we have here certain significant actions, as well as certain significant elements. It is not the bringing out of a basin of water, and the sprinkling or pouring out of that water anywhere or anyhow which constitutes Baptism; it is the application of that water in one way or other to a human body. It is not the bringing forth of bread and wine, and laying them upon the communion table; it is not even the breaking of that bread, or the pouring out of that cup which constitutes the Lord's Supper. All of us would at once feel that, if the officiating minister were to stop there, the main and essential part of the communion service would remain unperformed. What is done, then, with the material emblem or element is of still greater importance—is still more significant than the material emblem or element itself; nay, more, it is out of

these symbolic actions that the true, full, distinctive meaning of the two sacraments, regarded as symbolic exhibitions of divine truth,—the light in which at the moment we are alone regarding them,—is to be drawn. You apply water to a human body to wash it; and when, in admitting a new member to the outward and visible communion of the Church, you apply water to his body and so baptize him, this surely typifies not any or every washing away of inward spiritual defilement, but that particular cleansing of the human spirit from the guilt of sin which takes effect when true entrance is made into the spiritual kingdom of our Lord—the baptismal passage into the visible society, being meant to shadow out that great change effected, or rather that great privilege bestowed, when, on passing into the invisible society, the true Church of God, we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the remission of sins, and rise to the new life of the redeemed, forgiven, accepted in the Lord. Baptism is the outward sign and token of that first act or stage in the spiritual life which, as it can be but once described at the period of the new birth or regeneration of the soul, so baptism is but once administered, and that when the outward tie or link with the visible communion of the saints is first formed.

Let us turn now to the ordinance of the Lord's

Supper. Bread is broken; wine is poured out; and by a company assembled round a common table, that bread is eaten, that wine is drunk. The mere figurative showing forth the Lord's death as a sacrifice for sin is not and cannot be all that is meant to be symbolically represented here. Had that been all that was intended, the emblems or elements used would not have been peculiarly appropriate or expressive. Putting aside for the moment the explanatory words of institution, and looking simply at the rite itself, and letting it, as we have said, speak out to us its own meaning, who, from the mere spectacle of a company sitting down and eating bread and drinking wine together, could have gathered that the final terminating object thereof was to symbolize the sad and awful tragedy of the crucifixion? Even if the rite had been restricted to the breaking of a piece of bread and the pouring out of a cup of wine, it would have been but an inapt emblem of a death such as that of Christ upon the cross. Long usage has indeed connected together—rightly and properly connected together—the ideas of the breaking of the bread with the breaking of his body, the pouring out of the wine with the shedding of his blood. Surely, however, there is no original or natural fitness which bread and wine possess to represent a scene of suffering and death. The Jew had a much more lively figure of the death of Christ before his

eye in the slaying of an animal than the Christian has in this sacrament, if the ultimate intention here had been to show forth that death simply as a sacrifice for sin. But it is the Lord's death, not in its incidents of suffering, not in its general sacrificial character, but as becoming, when believingly contemplated, the food, the inward source and support of that spiritual life to which, in Christ Jesus, we are begotten, that is here exhibited. In this sacred ordinance—the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine that the Son of God died in our room and stead, and, by his death, has won for us life eternal—appears not in its bare abstract form as a truth to be analysed and demonstrated and defended. No; but in that far more important and practical light, of its yielding nourishment, refreshment, and strength to all who truly and heartily receive it into believing hearts. The bread and wine of this ordinance of the Supper, as part of their symbolic office, point us to the great death accomplished at Jerusalem,—an office which one can easily conceive other emblems might have served still more efficiently to execute; but beyond this they serve as no other emblems that we can think of could so well have done, to hold out that death of Jesus as doing for the spiritual life of the soul what these elements themselves do for the natural life of the body. As we look upon this use of them as laid upon the communion-table to be par-

taken of by all seated there, their silent language is, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "I am the bread of life; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

It is only when the idea is clearly apprehended and vividly realized, that it is not divine truth in itself, but that truth in its application and effects, as instrumental in originating and sustaining spiritual life, that the difference between the two sacraments comes clearly out to view. The water of baptism, no less than the bread and wine of the communion, speaks of the shedding and sprinkling of that blood without which there is no remission; but the one ordinance being meant to be significant of the divine life within the soul at its commencement, points to that blood as then made available for the removal of bygone guilt; the other ordinance, being meant to be significant of the divine life in its continuance and advance, points to the doctrine of the cross as made available all through life for the believer's spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. When you resolve, then, these, the sacraments of our religion, into naked and bare signs of certain facts and truths about the death of Christ, which any man, or at least all men who have historic faith in Christianity might unite in using, you take out of them the very heart and soul of their

significance; you let them open their lips, but before they have yet told half their meaning, you stifle their voice, and strike them dumb. Still, however, whether listened to or not, whether permitted to pour their meaning into open ears, or have their utterance hampered and choked throughout all the bygone ages of the Church, throughout all that strange fluctuation of human opinion as to the words of the written testimony—these two sacraments of the Church have stood bearing their silent testimony to the double object of Messiah's death,—that our guilt should be washed away, and that afterwards there should be sustained, advanced, invigorated, and perfected the life of faith, and love, and dutiful obedience.

With these remarks on the general significance of the two sacraments of the Christian Church, and their connexion with each other, let us look a little more particularly at the ordinance of baptism. And, in the first instance, let us sum up the information, not very voluminous, given regarding it in the New Testament Scriptures. In the course of our Lord's ministry, his disciples, we are told, made and baptized more disciples than John; but Jesus himself baptized not. He permitted his disciples to practice a rite which, as performed by them, had the same incompleteness and imperfection as that practiced by the Baptist. It was not till after the resurrection that

our Lord instituted what is properly to be regarded as Christian baptism.

On the day of Pentecost the excited multitude said to Peter and the rest, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Then they that gladly receive his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." During the persecution against the church at Jerusalem, which arose after the martyrdom of Stephen, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to Samaria, and the people with one accord giving heed to the things that were spoken by Philip, and expressing with all appearance of sincerity their belief, they were baptized, both men and women, and among the rest Simon the sorcerer, who soon afterwards gave but too patent proof that with all his professions, his heart was not right in the sight of God. The evangelist Philip was commissioned soon afterwards on the lonely road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza to join himself to the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace. He sat with him in his chariot, and as they drove along

expounded to him the chapter of Isaiah which he happened to be reading. The Ethiopian, as he heard believed, and so eager was he to be enrolled in the new community of Christians, that seeing some pool or stream of water by the way, he said to Philip, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

After his conversion Saul was three days without sight at Damascus; a vision then appeared to a certain disciple named Ananias, instructing him to go and lay his hands on Saul that he might receive his sight. Nothing is told as to who or what this Ananias was; we know only that he was not one of the twelve; nor was he a presbyter or elder, for no one had as yet been appointed to that office. In the vision which appeared nothing was said to him about doing anything more than laying his hands upon Saul that he might receive his sight; nevertheless, so soon as Saul received his sight, he arose and was baptized by Ananias.

When Peter went down to Cesarea and addressed the company assembled in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard his word, con-

ferring some of the gifts bestowed on the day of Pentecost, for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God; and when Peter saw that, he said, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized? and he commanded them to be baptized, not administering the rite himself, but committing the administration to the disciples who had accompanied him from Joppa. At Philippi, the heart of Lydia was opened, and not only was she baptized, but her household. At Philippi, the jailer was roused by the midnight alarm; arrested in his meditated act of suicide, called for a light, came trembling into the prison, then had the glad tidings proclaimed, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house; and be called out all his household, and they too heard and believed, and straightway upon the spot he and all his were baptized. On the occasion of Paul's first visit to Corinth, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. Very few of these baptisms were performed by Paul himself; he acted as Peter did at Cesarea,—he committed that duty to Silas or Timothy, or some of those who were with him. So little impression had the mere act of baptism made upon Paul's mind, that a few years afterwards, writing to the Corinthians, the apostle said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. And I baptized also

the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

At Ephesus, Paul met with certain disciples who, though they had been baptized unto John's baptism, had neither received the Holy Ghost, nor heard of the Pentecostal effusion. Under the apostle's direction these were rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,—a sufficient proof that the two baptisms were different ordinances, the one temporary, the other perpetual; the one preparatory, the other final.

Such is the amount of the information contained in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles.

In the Epistles the only allusions to the ordinance are the following:—"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—(Romans vi. 3, 4, 5.) "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."—(1 Cor. xii. 13.) "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."—(Gal. iii. 27.)

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."—(Eph. iv. 5.) "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."—(Col. ii. 11, 12.) "The like figure whereunto even baptism filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."—(1 Peter iii. 21.) These and an obscure passage in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians about being baptized for the dead, embrace all the notices of this ordinance in the New Testament from which any thing can be gathered as to its nature and significance.

With these statements of the New Testament before us, what then are the conclusions to which we are naturally conducted?

1. As to the persons by whom this ordinance is to be administered. In front of the facts that Christ himself never baptized; that the apostles are seldom related to have done so; that Philip, who so largely engaged in the service in Samaria, held only the appointment of a deacon, the official duties of which position in the Church had reference to the charge of the contributions of the Church; that Ananias is not known to have held any office; and that the brethren

who accompanied Peter, and by whom the first Gentile converts at Cesarea were baptized, were private members of the Church: with these plain facts before us, we cannot surely attach exclusively the right and privilege of administering baptism to any order or class of office-bearers in the Church. Wherever the Church has had time and opportunity to mature and reduce to fixed and orderly arrangement her methods of worship and government, it is not only a legitimate but a useful and becoming thing that this ordinance of baptism should be administered by those set apart to the office of the ministry; but that no other baptism than that so celebrated is a valid one, following the light which the history of apostolic times affords us, we cannot say. Should a sudden and dangerous illness seize either an infant or an unbaptized adult who had a strong desire, and was in all respects a suitable subject for the rite, should no clergyman be at hand, and in prospect of speedy dissolution, should a private Christian do for the dying child or the dying adult what Peter's attendants did for the household of Cesarea, who would be prepared to say that that was not a good and valid baptism?

2. Again, as to the time and mode and place of baptism, so great a variety of practice is presented to us in the sacred narrative as to leave us at perfect liberty to follow whatever course in these respects

consulting for the order and general good of the Church, may suggest itself as the most appropriate. We can scarcely doubt that at least partial immersion was at first the general practice. Jesus and the Baptist, Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water and came up out of it,—processes of descent and emergence which the apostle employs in two of the passages already quoted as illustrative of the believer's death to sin and life to righteousness, the burial with Christ, the rising again together with him. John baptized at Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there, — a reason which would not have been a valid one had our present practice of sprinkling been followed by the Baptist. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that the 3000 who were baptized on the day of Pentecost could have each gone through the same ceremonial with our Lord himself or with those who were baptized by John in the Jordan. And it is perhaps still less conceivable that within the precincts of the prison-house at Philippi any means of immersion should have been available for that hasty and midnight baptism.

Nor is any likeness or uniformity of time, or place, or circumstance observed. Now you have it in the house, now by the river, now on the road-side. Here to thousands, there to families, again to individuals; now it is in an assembly where spectators are looking

on; now it is when none are present but the baptizer and the baptized; by night, by day; in public and in private; in all kinds of ways, by all kinds of persons, in all kind of places, were those first baptisms of the Christian Church conducted. A sublime simplicity of ritual observance here, which overlooks the outward mode, and concerns itself alone with the reality and significance of the rite!

3. We touch, however, a more difficult question when we ask, Who are the persons to whom, according to the original character and design of the ordinance, and in accordance with the original practice of the Church, this ordinance should be administered? On the very face of the narrative it appears that baptism was the initiating rite by which members were to be admitted into the Christian society. Almost all societies which are organized with any degree of completeness and have any great and definite objects to realize, have some established mode of admission; and as it was natural that this spiritual society, the Church, should have such a door of entrance, it pleased its Divine founder to appoint baptism to be that door. At first, and when the society was in process of formation, gathering its members out of the Jewish and heathen communities, in the midst of which it had its birth, it was obviously required of those admitted by that door that they should make a credible profession of their faith

in Christ; such faith constituting the essential element of that character to be possessed and exhibited by all true members of the Church. Baptism was to be administered, therefore,—could only with a meaning and purpose be administered, to adults who made such profession. But what exactly did baptism do for them? what spiritual benefit did it confer? was there any grace or gift of the Holy Spirit attached necessarily and invariably to this way of admitting new members into connexion with the visible Church? It is to such baptisms as these, the baptisms of adults of the first converts to Christianity, that the passages I have already quoted from the New Testament particularly apply. It is in such baptisms as these that the full virtue or efficacy, whatever we may conceive that to be, which the rite possesses, was realized. Now are there not, it may be asked, such strong expressions used regarding it in the New Testament as to forbid the idea that it was nothing more than the outward and visible sign of membership attached to those received into the Christian fellowship? Is it not said, that it is he that believeth and is baptized who shall be saved? is it not said, that we must be born of water and of the Spirit before we can enter the kingdom? Is not the water of this baptism spoken of as the washing of regeneration? Now, in answer to such questions as these, we have two remarks to offer:—

1st. Whatever spiritual benefit may, in the instances we have now before us, have been conveyed by baptism, it could not have been that described in Scripture as the regeneration or new birth of the soul; for, in every case in which the baptism was rightly celebrated, that change had been effected before this baptism took place. Repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the realizing of which within the soul its regeneration takes place—these were to precede the baptism. Unless we are prepared to say, that baptism was itself the instrument of conversion—that those who beforehand had not been true believers were made so in and by that washing with water—we must repudiate the idea of regenerating grace accompanying the ordinance.

2d. The language employed regarding baptism appears to us to be perfectly warranted—to have a natural and sufficient meaning attached to it, though we regard baptism simply as the external bond by which membership in the Church was symbolized. We are called upon, not only individually to believe, but to confess that faith before men, and to do so by connecting ourselves with others of a like mind and a like heart. In these circumstances it comes as fitly and appropriately to be said, He that believeth and professes openly his faith, as that, He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. No one, however, would put a mere profession of faith in the same

category with the faith itself; no one would regard the profession as occupying the same place or standing in the same relation to the salvation that the faith does; no one would say that the profession was as vitally, essentially, necessarily connected with the salvation as the faith was. It might happen that the circumstances should be such that no time or opportunity of professing was given. In such a case the faith alone, without the profession, would surely be enough. Now the being baptized is but a more striking, more solemn, more formal way of making that profession. We should not, then, confound the faith and the baptism any more than we should confound the faith and the confession; nor are we obliged, nor are we warranted by any phraseology, however strong, employed in Scripture, to represent the one as having any more vital or essential connexion with the salvation than the other has. And here, too, it might happen—and in those apostolic times we know it did happen—that when there was genuine faith, there might be no fit time or opportunity for being baptized, as was the case with the thief on the cross. We surely could not say that the faith failed in its great object because of the absence of its appropriate external sign? Taking baptism again as the outward sign and seal that the person on whom it was affixed had made the great spiritual transition from death to life, from unbelief to faith, had passed

out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, we but proceed according to the ordinary usages of language, by which the sign and the thing signified are often identified, the expressions denoting each interchanged with the other, when we say of every true believer, that he was buried by that baptism into Christ's death, and rose out of that baptism into newness of life, without believing that the baptism was either the efficient cause, or the divinely constituted instrument by which that great inward spiritual result was wrought out in the soul. It is in such a sense as that, and in no other, that we conceive of baptism as having to do with the regeneration or renewal of the soul by the Holy Ghost. We regard it in fact as nothing more than the Church's corporate seal, by which, in obedience to Divine command, she authenticates the admission of members into her communion, by that visible signature conferring on them a title to a participation in all her outward privileges. The use of such seal is of great importance; it gives visibility and definiteness to the Church as a chartered corporation; it marks it out age after age as a spiritual society separate from the world, having principles of life, bonds of union, objects of pursuit which are all her own—a kingdom among this world's kingdoms, yet owning a higher birth, and aiming at a higher destiny. And to him upon whom that admission token is impressed,

and who is truly that which this token describes, one washed from his sins in the laver of regeneration, baptism is an entrance within a hallowed circle of new influences, new relationships, new companionships, into a region where a clearer light shineth, and a purer, heavenlier air is breathed.

We can detect no mystic, occult spiritual power and energy belonging by divine appointment to this initiatory rite of Christianity; we can point to no single separate spiritual benefit which here and here only is conveyed; we can describe no inward spiritual change which by this instrument, and by it exclusively, is realized. Were baptism what so many affirm and believe it to be, the divinely appointed channel along which the regenerating grace of the Spirit specially, if not exclusively, descends, how could St. Paul have spoken of it thus?—"I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."* If baptism were a regenerating rite, how could Paul have been so thankful that he had baptized or regenerated so few? Was it not sorrow rather than joy, regret rather than thankful-

* 1 Cor. i. 14–17.

ness, that the retrospect should have awakened in his breast? In one sense it was not true that Christ had not sent the Apostle to baptize. He was acting under the great commission which enjoined the observance of this rite; but just because of the place given to baptism in that commission, all the more emphatic is the testimony here borne by St. Paul to its secondary character, its comparative unimportance. So inferior, so subordinate a thing did baptizing, as compared with the preaching of the gospel, appear in his eyes, that it had no glory by reason of the glory that was more excellent, and therefore he could say, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." But is it to be said that we degrade this rite, or strip it of all high significance, when we look upon it as that sacred bond which binds each member of the mystical body of the Son of God to that great spiritual commonwealth, founded on divine promises, guarded by divine power, endowed with divine energies, invested with divine privileges—that Zion of God, of which such glorious things have been spoken, to which pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the giving of the gospel and the service of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

Why, then, do we baptize infants? No express mention is made of infants in the command of Christ which instituted this rite; no distinct case of the

baptism of infants is mentioned in the sacred narrative. Are we not acting, then, without a divine warrant? are we not contradicting the inherent nature and design of this ordinance when infants are baptized by us? If it be true, as we are distinctly taught it is, that in the spiritual commonwealth of the Church baptism takes that place which in the Jewish commonwealth was occupied by circumcision, each being the initiatory or admission rite of the society, then it will at once appear that there is scarcely an objection to the baptism of infants which might not with equal weight be urged against the circumcision of infants. In the earliest period of Judaism the adult Abraham received circumcision, a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith which he had when yet uncircumcised, just as in the earliest ages of the Church the adult Christian received baptism, a sign and seal of that faith which he had being yet unbaptized. Afterwards the children of those originally circumcised as adults were to be circumcised in infancy; yet Paul testifies to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Now, might it not with as much reason have been asked, How can an infant take on it that obligation to obey the law of Moses, as, How can an infant make profession of faith in Christ? The Covenant of the Law was established with the Jewish people and their children after them, and so the sign and

seal of that covenant which undoubtedly in its full express signification could be verified only on an adult, came, nevertheless, to be impressed on an infant, God dealing with the Jews in this covenant not merely as separate individuals, but as families. Shall we believe it of that new and better covenant which was established upon better promises, that it was narrower in its spirit, more limited in its reach? Could that multitude whom Peter addressed on the day of Pentecost, whom he urged to come forward to be baptized on the very ground that the promise was to them and to their children, well believe that the baptism thus offered to them was yet to be denied to their little ones? Once that it was perceived that the new rite of baptism took the place of the old rite of circumcision, would not the universal Jewish instinct prompt the practice of having their infants with themselves baptized? And even among the Gentile converts, would not the universal parental instinct act in the same way? Were the Corinthians taught by Paul that the faith of one parent made even the children of that family holy, and was that outward holiness to be deprived of its appropriate symbol? Were those, of whom the early converts of Christianity heard that Jesus himself once took up one of them into his arms and blessed it, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven—were they to be excluded from all outward and visible connexion with

that Saviour, and to stand in no nearer relation to him than the children of the heathen around? Placed in this view, and looking upon the rite of baptism as I believe they did, it is very difficult to believe that the first Christians did not claim it for their children, or that that claim was refused. True, there is no express command to baptize infants as well as adults, but neither is there any express command to admit females as well as males to the table of the Lord; if it be the absence of such specification in the words of institution that is gone upon, women might be debarred from the one sacrament as rightfully as infants from the other. True, there is no express command, but neither is there any express prohibition; and taking the whole circumstances of the case into account, it seems to us that a positive prohibition would have been far more needed to prevent the practice of infant baptism than a positive injunction to originate it. True, we have no distinct mention of an infant being baptized, but we are to remember that at the first and for some time no instance of the separate baptism of an infant could occur; and considering the narrow space which the New Testament narrative covers, the omission of any reference to infant baptism is not remarkable. It is rather remarkable, on the other hand, that among the few recorded cases the baptism of so many as four Christian families should have been recorded,—those of

Lydia, the Philippian Jailer, Cornelius, and Stephanas,—in which families there may have been some of tender age. We cannot, indeed, prove that there were infants in any of these four households. We cannot by any clear and certain instance prove that infant baptism was an apostolic institute, was the general or universal practice of the apostolic age, but neither is there any proof on the other side, any evidence that infants were not then baptized; and we are disposed to think that the burden of the proof lies not with those who follow the practice of infant baptism, but with those who repudiate it. We have, however, one strong fact to urge. About a hundred years after the death of Christ, historic traces present themselves of infant baptism; not as an innovation, as only partially prevailing, as in many quarters objected to, but as the general practice of the Christian community. And we know that, from the third century down to the fifteenth, it was the universal custom of the Christian Church. Could this well have happened, if it had been set up at first in direct opposition to the practice of apostolic times? Still, with all these considerations to urge in behalf of infant baptism, we would plead for it as a practice which the spirit of the divine command, and the genius of the Christian institute, allow us to observe, rather than a custom which the letter of the command obliges us to follow. There are those who, as you

well know, cannot go with us even thus far, and who do not feel at liberty, without more express sanction than, as it seems, the Word of God contains, to do what seems to them to contravene the very nature and desire of the ordinance. Of our difference with such we shall only say that it never should have been magnified into one of such weight and importance, that the Church of Christ should have divided thereupon into separate communions; for if the Church of the apostles, acting under immediate guidance from heaven, was taught to tolerate within its bosom diversity both of opinion and practice as to the rite of circumcision, we might well have learned to tolerate diversity of opinion and practice as to the rite of baptism.

We cling with fondness, however, to the baptism of infants. It seems to us a beautiful and impressive spectacle that Christianity should be seen thus bending over the cradle and claiming the new-born babe for Him who died for sinners, and for that blessed and glorious immortality which he hath opened up for us beyond the grave. Her presence there, her voice of love and hope, how comforting to those into whose weak hands the care from birth of a young immortal has been committed! In presenting his child for baptism, a Christian parent undertakes a weighty responsibility; that responsibility would rest

on him the same whether his infant was baptized or not; but a burden, too heavy for his unaided spirit to bear, does it not largely help him to bear when he is permitted from the very first, and in this sacred rite, to commit his offspring to the covenanted mercy of God in Christ? It is as a privilege rather than a duty that we would have you bring your infants to the baptismal font, grateful to Him who suffers his holy name to be named so early over them, and casting this your greatest care on Him who careth for you and yours.

APPENDIX D.—P. 229.

It would reduce by one the number of the appearances, should the theory of Ebrard be admitted, that the appearance to Mary Magdalene was not a separate one from that to the other women; but we are not prepared to believe this.

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